

JainDigest

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A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America



INSPIRING
WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT
INITIATIVES IN
INDIA



JAIN DIGEST

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On the Cover:

Inspiring Women's Empowerment Initiatives in India

In this issue of Jain Digest we have featured several organizations in India that are providing opportunities for women to earn a living, increase their sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices; thus, empowering them to influence social change for themselves and others.

Disclosure

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

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Editor's Note

Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

On behalf of Jain Digest Editorial Staff, I wish you a very Happy New Year! Although the year has started with yet another wave of COVID-19, we hope that the thought "*This too shall pass*" brightens your day and together we all look forward to good health, peace and prosperity in 2022 and beyond.

With this February 2022 issue, we go back to our multiple section format and does not have a specific theme as such. However, we have chosen to highlight "Women's Empowerment" on the front cover since in the Inspiration section we have two articles related to women. One article is about a powerful icon – the late US Supreme Court judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the other article covers brief information about several women's empowerment initiatives in India. And just a few days ago I learned about another compassionate, powerful woman – Sindhutai Sapkal – who was considered as Mother Teresa of the Maharashtra state in India. She passed ways at the age of 74 on January 4, 2022. She was a social worker and social activist known particularly for her work in raising orphaned children in India. In addition to the other 750 awards, she was awarded the Padmashri in 2021 in Social Work category. More about her in June issue.

We, at Jain Digest bow down to these iconic women and also to those who make an effort to empower common women. They inspire all of us with their dedication to causes that improve people's lives.

In the Compassion section, in the "A Cycle of Compassion and Kindness", Deven Shah reflects upon the need for us to feel abundance in order to show kindness and compassion to others. In the article "Compassion Articulated", Yara Almouradi tells us about creativity shown by the participants at the International Art Contest Compassion in Action 2021.

In the Devotion section, we have been blessed to have an article by Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai titled "Diving in Divine Love" where he explains that love, when directed towards the Divine alone can bring the experience of true happiness. In the article "10 Commandments of a Guru", author Reena Shah explains how following Guru's *agya* can ease our path to liberation. The third article in this section highlights the life of Pujya Panyas Dr. Arunvijayji Maharaj who was awarded a prestigious D. Litt degree by Delhi University on 9th January 2022.

In the Education section read varied articles such as the latest news about the activities of JAINA's Academic Liaison Committee, the mistakes we make in pronouncing words in sutras, an introspective poem about cycle of birth & rebirth, and a book review of a recently published book "Atmasiddhi Shastra" – a commentary by Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji on the magnum opus written by Shrimad Rajchandraji 125 years ago.

In the Information section, Dr. Chris Jain Miller provides an update about JAINA's Ahimsa Meals and Fasting program conducted in 2021. A lot of credit for the success of this program goes to a global organization "Food for Life Global" (FFLG) which enabled many donors to feed the needy through their worldwide network. Read an interview with Paul Rodney Turner; the Executive Director at FFLG in the Conversation section. We also have a report of activities and achievements of JAINA's Women's Committee chaired by Dr. Mamta Shaha.

In the Transformation section we have included an article published by Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley titled "How Purpose Changes Across Your Lifetime" The other article written by Ramesh Khandhar is about introspection – part 1 in a series of two articles.

In the "Young Generation" section we are republishing an article written by Riya Patel and published in the YJA publication Young Minds. Riya shows us how she found "Jainism" in cultures around the World. Also read an article by Harshita Jain in which she narrates her experience in attending a Religions for Peace conference in Germany.

During October and November last year, we had requested our community members to share their experiences in practicing forgiveness. We thank all of those who sent in their responses. The goal was to bring more awareness towards this important teaching of Jain religion that helps us purify. Reading these stories will nurture you spiritually.

My sincere thanks to all authors for their timely submissions and our editorial team for their diligence in editing the articles. Thanks to Jayanaben Shah for designing the wonderful cover page, overall design of the magazine. 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 The next issue will be published in June 2022. Stay safe. Stay healthy.

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JAINA President's Message



Jai Jinendra,

On behalf of the JAINA Executive Committee and Board of directors, I wish you and your loved ones a very happy, healthy, peaceful, and spiritually uplifting 2022! As a new President of JAINA, I am thankful to all of you for trusting me to lead the vibrant JAINA organization and take it further to new heights.

My tenure as a president of JAINA began with a short trip to India. My first stop was Dharampur, near Valsad. I was fortunate to be able partake in the Ashtanika Pratistha Mahotsav. What a pious and joyful event! The new majestic 108 pillars Mahavirswami temple in all white marble will make Dharampur a Tirth one should not miss. Hundreds of NRIs from the US participated including President Maheshbhai and past JAINA President Kirit Daftary. At Dharampur, I met many dignitaries and scholars like Shri Lokesh Muni and the past Gujarat Chief Minister Shri Vijay Rupani who conveyed his appreciation for JAINA's humanitarian and charitable activities in Gujrat. After Pratistha day, had an audience with Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai Jhaveri and P.P. Shri Rajhans Suriji.

From Dharampur, I went to nearby Shantiniketan at Tithal – to receive blessings from P.P. Shri Jinchandraji Maharaj and Shri Kirtichandraji (Triputi Bandhu). I got a chance to see the construction in progress of Vaiyavach Dham for Sadhus or Sadhvis of all sects.

Next, I went to Navsari where Acharya Shri Ratnasundersurisarwarji MS was in residence. Since he was familiar with many of JAINA's Vaiyavach projects in India, he encouraged JAINA to work with ALERT group that has a few chapters in America. From Navsari I traveled to Rajkot where on January 4th, Shri Dhirajmuni was to inaugurate a medical center and a Vaiyavach center. I was invited to speak about JAINA in the presence of Tarlaben Doshi and Maheshbhai Wadher.

Ahmedabad was the next stop. I went to Gujarat Vishwakosh office of Padma Shri Kumarpal Desai to thank him for his daily lectures during Paryushan. While in Ahmedabad, I visited Pandit Shri Jitendra B. Shah of Shrutratnakar. He took me and JAINA office manager Dhimen Vora to the Shrutratnakar Adhyayan Kendra site at Panchasar town near Sankheswar. The construction work is in progress at this upcoming campus to educate our Sadhus,

Sadhvis and Shravaks on various Jain Topics. This Vaiyavach project is partially funded by JAINA.

As is traditional for all the past JAINA Presidents, I attended the opening of the 48th Medical camp at Bidada Sarvodaya Trust hospital in Kutch. The Vaiyavach Committee of JAINA has provided support to the upashrayas at BST. Chairman Shri Vijay Chheda gave me an extensive tour of the eight Upashrayas that were hosting over 100 Sadhus and Sadhvis on that day.

I was privileged to be invited to the inauguration of Nandi Sarovar Ahimsa Dham in Kutch. This project includes an animal shelter, a hospital, and an agenda of planting 500,000 trees, a water retention system, Israel-style farming, planting all kinds of Ayurvedic plants, and organic farming.

I returned to Ahmedabad and visited Vardhman Sanskar Dham. Chairman Shri Lalitbhai Dhama and the trustees praised JAINA's Vaiyavach activities. Later Shri Lalitbhai took me to meet with Shri Samvegbhai, Chairman of the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi.

From Ahmedabad, I headed to Mumbai and stopped by Padgha to pay respect to P. P. Shri Namramuniji. Padgha is the site for Namramuniji's new ashram under construction. I got to see a museum of Jain history that was very inspiring. In Mumbai, I also got the opportunity to visit with Acharya Shri Arunvijayji who has been delivering a series of lectures on Jain Karma Theory to the Jains of North America.

The last stop was the meeting with the chairman of JAINA India Foundation – Dr. Bipin Doshi. At his home, he facilitated a meeting with representatives of ten Jain organizations in Mumbai including Jain Education and Empowerment Trust, Mumbai Jain Yuvak Sangh, Jain Jagruti Group, Kutch Yuvak Sangh, Samast Mahajan, The Jain Avenue team, Jain Sahitya Academy Trust, Applied Jainism Team, Jain Academy Education Research Center and Shree Kutchi Visa Oswal Jain Mahajan – Borivali.

I wanted to meet other Mahatmas and dignitaries, but I had to cut short India visit due to Covid related health concerns. I returned to the US on January 14.

I and each member of the new Executive Committee look forward to serving you over the next two years.

Sincerely,

Haresh Shah

PAST-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Farewell Message from JAINA's Past President – Mahesh Wadher



Dear Sadharmiks,

Jai Jinendra! Pranam!

It is with humility, deep gratitude and satisfaction that I am writing this farewell message as your JAINA President at the end of an unprecedented two and half year tenure (July 2019 - December 2021), which I have served along with a very dedicated group of Executive Committee members and volunteers from across North America.

I have had the great pleasure and privilege of serving at the helm of JAINA with the wonderful support of 37 dedicated JAINA Committee Chairs, Directors and leaders from 70 Jain Centers in North America, as well as hundreds of dedicated volunteers, distinguished thought leaders, partner organizations and many inspiring Sadhu-Sadhvi Bhagwants. Together, and in unison, we undertook many new initiatives to organize events and programs that addressed present and long-term needs for the benefit of Jains across all age groups.

One of the most important things I have learned during the last two years of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was that one must seize the moment and not procrastinate or hesitate in pursuing one's aspirations and vision for the benefit of community. I was honored to work with many like-minded individuals to empower JAINA teams and generous donor partners to plan and coordinate relief for this unimaginable tragedy that befell humanity and affected many millions in America, India and around the world by sickness, loss of life, livelihood, or other hardships.

As a premier faith-based humanitarian organization for Diaspora Jains outside India, we are proud to have done our collective best to provide compassionate services, and alleviate suffering and disruptions whether by serving 147,854 Ahimsa (vegan) meals during October and November 2021 to the needy, fundraising over \$180,000 for the Covid Relief Fund, or installing 15 Oxygen plants in hospitals across India totaling \$1.5 million, raising \$1 million for Sadharmik Bhakti or raising over \$1.2 million for the Vaiyavach Committee's efforts to provide comfortable Vihar facility in Upashrays, safety and mobility to our revered Sadhu/Sadhvi Bhagwants during their arduous foot journeys. The donors have also enabled JAINA to provide a fully equipped Ambulance to Girivihar hospital in Palitana and building of a new modern school in Rajgir, Bihar – the home of Veerayatan. I am thankful to many donors and volunteers, and in particular to Dr Nitinbhai Shah who has exemplified Karuna with his assistance for humanity.

Early in 2020, we successfully launched a new and colorful JAINA logo to enhance our global branding and emphasize the teaching that all living beings are interdependent for existence i.e., *Parasparagraho Jivanam*.

Recognizing the need for greater relevance of JAINA to priority projects and potential for a broader footprint of activity, we formed 11 new committees during the last two years.

To bring us closer to our Motherland and engage India Jains and philanthropists, the Overseas Relations Committee created a legal JAINA entity in India - "JAINA India Foundation (JIF)" for organizing events such as international conferences and supporting research on Jain topics, while also leveraging our minority status in India. JIF launched a monthly online magazine, JAIN AVENUE, in August 2020. The Overseas Relations Committee is also planning on cleaning up religious sites in India. I am grateful to our Past President Dilip Shah for his foresight and persistent efforts in making this long-held JAINA initiative a reality.

The JAINA Academic Liaison Committee (ALC), under the leadership of another Past President, Dr.Sulekhhbai Jain, who was prolific in executing Memorandums of Understanding negotiated with some of the most prestigious academic centers of learning in the US and Canada (as well as Belgium, Israel and India) - ALC has established 32 Endowed professorships, post-doctoral fellowships and research internships/scholarship programs in Jainism across many university campuses by securing over \$15 million in pledge commitments from Jain donors while leveraging nearly \$40 million in university investments to further Jain studies, which will greatly help raise the

PAST-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

awareness of Jainism in western academic and media circles while providing our new generations many learning opportunities.

One of our proudest achievements of 2021 was the all-virtual 20th Biennial JAINA Convention. Over 300 volunteers worked tirelessly with our India team to organize an amazing Convention experience over the LAAVEO convention platform. We successfully transcended the ongoing Pandemic challenge by adapting to online event programming on the theme "JAINISM: A RESILIENT PATH TO PEACE". Over 70 distinguished scholars provided enlightening speeches for which I commend the organizational efforts by Chair Dilipbhai Parekh and co-Chair Manishbhai Mehta. Manishbhai has kept abreast of outstanding speakers, trends and new topics with which he has enriched our audiences for many years. Our Tirth Darshan videos received many praises.

Our Convention was not only attended by more than 15,000 viewers from 23 Countries in multiple time zones, but also key content and program participation in JAB "JAINA Academic Bowl" and "Jain Got Talent" competitions.

I am grateful to Jayanaben Shah for her leadership and amazing creativity in delivering such innovative cultural programming and her leadership of the Calendar Committee.

Under Dilipbhai Parekh's leadership, the Jain Digest Editorial Committee produced several publications for the benefit of a global readership, including a special issue on Jain Studies in America.

Our special thanks to Rahul Kapoor Jain from India who contributes motivational videos to JAINA newsletters and Jain Avenue magazine.

These above are just a few examples of how JAINA's 37 Committees are the lifeblood of all activity coordinated under oversight of JAINA EC. Keeping these committees productive, vibrant, and working in sync is key to smooth functioning of our Federation. Without them, we could not operate on the scale that we are able to.

My heartfelt gratitude to our staff members Dhimen Vora and Priyanka Mehta in India for their services in supporting JAINA website, IT related matters and weekly newsletters.

It is my sincere hope that the future JAINA EC and member centers use these exemplary successes as new benchmarks to educate, contribute and lead new community development and outreach efforts within their regions of influence.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of Centers and donor support for JAINA's ongoing operations and programs, and I want to thank them for their generosity as well as encourage them to keep JAINA as their priority year-end charity giving. These donations will greatly help build a resilient and vibrant organization.

I especially want to acknowledge the warm blessings, inspiration and inner strength I received from the many interactions held with Rashtrasant Pujya Gurudev Shri Namramuniji, Pujya Acharya Shri Chandanaji, Pujya Shri Vijay Ratnasundersuriji Maharaj saheb, Pujya Shri Dhirumuniji, Pujya Shri Arunvijayji Maharaj Saheb, 108 Param Pujya Muni Shri Praman Sagarji Maharaj Saheb, Pujya Acharya Shri Lokeshmuniji, and Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai.

I wish President Hareshbhai Shah and the new JAINA EC the best in their tenure that began in January 2022. I will remain ready and available to support them in whatever way needed.

I want to humbly ask forgiveness if I have hurt anyone's feelings during the course of this term which has been the highlight of my life. I am ever grateful to my wife Usha and Wadher family members for their unwavering patience and support.

Yours in JAINA service,

Mahesh Wadher

A Cycle of Compassion and Kindness

By Deven Pravin Shah



Deven is an engineer and a marketer. Deven lives with his family in Orange, California. He grew up in India, and they speak Gujarati at home. Deven says he is grateful for the mindfulness meditations and his ability to reflect. It has opened his awareness to navigate the terrain of thinking patterns and emotions. Deven loves writing, coaching youth in public speaking and communication, cooking, hiking, skiing, and creativity in developing & presenting ideas. <https://blog.devenshah.net> <https://toastmasters-lightning.org>

There are ripples from inside that have a soothing, calming effect on me when I give. It can decrease cortisol, a stress hormone, helping me lower my blood pressure and loosen the grip of worries/anxieties/tension. Doing nice things for others boosts serotonin, the neurotransmitter responsible for feelings of satisfaction and well-being. Altruism also releases endorphins, giving us a “helper’s high.” From Carl Safina’s *Beyond Words*, I learned that species in our genetic lineage cultivated empathy millions of years ago: it helped them survive in the wild. Being sensitive to how others might be feeling or going through is hardwired in us even before we evolved to be humans.

I think science and religion are converging and pointing in the same direction when they show virtues in compassion, kindness, and mutual care. It is part of our DNA: it unlocks healing, soothing, nurture, relaxation, and nourishment from inside.

Is it any wonder that we see acts of compassion and care are all around us? The family members take care of each other. Friends reach out and are there to help. Communities cultivate support networks to take care of local neighborhoods. There are stories everywhere of individuals making a difference in the lives of local youth using coaching and group activities. Initiatives spring up to rescue animals.

I saw a touching narrative on the Instagram of garbage collectors in Turkey picking up books from trash and starting a library for kids. A group of artists and songwriters create an outlet for children fighting cancer to express feelings using music. Read a touching story of individuals transforming corner garbage lots into gardens of creative expression. Doctors serve for free to give a gift of vision to blind people. I could go on forever. The stories about acts of kindness make me feel good, as they are expressions of the genuine and priceless treasure of abundance we carry inside. It isn’t necessarily about what or how much people give, but how simple actions create small, positive ripples in small circles.

Questions

It brings questions for me. If compassion and kindness do us so much good, why do we see/hear news of friction, animosity, hatred, terrorism, legal battles, exploitation, etc.?

On a personal level, am I being compassionate and kind? Sometimes, yes – hopefully often. In every moment of my life or all the time, honestly no – even if I may not be trying to hurt or hate someone, my guard could still be up to disconnect myself, or my sensitivity to someone/something may not be the same.

What is stopping?

I think the modern socioeconomic and political fabric has an idea weaved in that people act only out of self-interest. Humans fiercely compete and so get busy creating empires to fight and dominate. We (humans) started seeing the ecology of the universe as a set of resources to have or consume, coined a name for it – the environment. Instead of being an integral, harmonious part, we started pillaging and plundering it. Over the past 500+ years, our external conditioning has led us to chase material things. I am part of the chase as well.

The scarcity mindset disconnects from the universal abundance around me and inside me. The attachment to material things and fear can be a self-sustaining spiral fueled by – and at the same time fueling – my ego and reactive thinking patterns.

Space of Abundance!??

Can I cultivate a space where I can connect with or be a part of the abundance again? A few ideas emerge for me while trying to be aware of my thinking patterns and exploring answers.

ONE: Can I lose myself at least some of the time doing something that I enjoy?



Can I focus on something fun, creative, and constructive? In the moments when I lose myself into it, I think it allows my inner abundance to emerge through my walls of ego, insecurities, worries, etc., and enrich me. Reading, writing, and creating presentations is one outlet for me. When I coach youth, it brings so much joy and energy from inside for me. Cooking is turning into one more outlet; grateful to Covid-19 for that. Running and its endorphins release connects me with joy and positive vibrations. Going back to learning a little bit more harmonium sounds like a fun outlet, too, if I can find a guru to teach me. I have seen artists creating wonders with paintings. I think Bela (my wife) finds it in gardening in the backyard.

TWO: Step outside from time to time and feel the ambiance.

Hear sounds of birds and wind and vehicles passing by, see plant leaves move with the wind, feel a puff of air on my face, see things around me with childlike curiosity and a “new” pair of eyes. It can pause my thinking, keep me in the present moment, open space inside, and unlock healing powers. When I go for a vacation, the newness automatically yanks me into present moments, giving me a healthy boost of energy and relaxation. Can I “go on a vacation” at this moment – it is new and the first time, after all.

One priceless nugget that I have captured from mindfulness programs and readings about mind-body stress reduction medical research is that I am the one that observes my body sensations, thoughts, emotions, or physical pains & aches. I am not my mind, nor my body, nor my feelings, nor my pain – I am the one that observes them. Just that one idea of being a witness has tremendous power to unlock healing and happiness from the inside.

When I let my ambiance soak in through my physical senses, it also makes it easier for me to witness all that is happening now.

*“And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair”
- Khalil Gibran*

THREE: Have a sense of gratitude.

I could be taking so much for granted and complaining about what I don’t have. Breathing happens automatically, keeping me alive. I can think, write, read, walk, run, eat, smile, talk, brush my teeth using the coordinated motion of my hands and mouth – each of these is nothing short of a miracle. I have a place to live, family, and friends. If I slow down and

think about it, I may not have to go too far to count my blessings. The gratitude opens a space of abundance inside and connects me with positive vibes.

FOUR: Do small acts of kindness.

Can I listen with more patience while talking with family, friends, colleagues, or customers? I think it is a gift when someone feels understood. Can I do tiny bits to create soothing ripples of resonance? Call a friend, take care of small details for someone, or maybe appreciate someone. Smile when I talk with someone, let go a bit, donate something, share a positive thought, or spread the good news?

I wish I knew this in my teenage if not even earlier – my feeling follows the action and not the other way round. A small act can change how I feel and think, opening flood gates for potentially an even more significant change.

A Cycle of Compassion and Kindness

When I feel I am happy from the inside, I am willing to smile at others. When I think I have something meaningful to create, I am eager to contribute. When I am comfortable allowing my emotions to dissolve in my spacious awareness, I am willing to understand and empathize with others. When I feel secure from the inside, I am eager to embrace and surrender to new possibilities without worry or fear. I am willing to give when I can feel my inner abundance. Act of giving connects me again with the limitless abundance and the universal happiness. The cycle can be so beautiful, empowering, and self-sufficient.

There is an energy field with tremendous bind from my past actions and emotions – the karma: it can make this all easier said/thought than done. Hopefully, self-awareness helps maintain the aim in the right direction.

I have seen plants sprouting through tiny cracks in the city walls. I have heard stories of children playing carefree inside the warzones where people could and do lose lives at any moment. I think the nature of every living being is to heal, grow, develop, smile, and give no matter how difficult external circumstances might be. I am a tiny dot in the connected universal ocean of all living beings. There are small ripples worldwide connecting us all with peace, warmth, healing, nurture, and joy: they are gently nudging us to unfold and merge with the universal consciousness – the Atma.

Compassion Articulated

By Yara Almouradi, M.F.A.



Yara Almouradi has a Masters of Fine Arts degree in Drawing and Painting, is the Co-Founder of the nonprofit Sight & Sketches and is a Visual Arts Professor at her alma mater, CSU-Fullerton.

Yara just completed a solo exhibit 'Seen and Heard', at Muzeo Museum & Cultural Center in Anaheim, California and is preparing for an upcoming gallery in France.

In her spare time, Yara enjoys spending time with loved ones and traveling.

It is thrilling, as an art educator, to see such diverse artwork, submitted on an international scale, exemplifying the ethereal concept of compassion. The International Art Contest: Compassion in Action 2021 globally united over 300 individuals of all ages, enthusiasts and professionals alike, with a single idea: how to successfully interpret the ideals of compassion in a creative manner.

Viewing these entries as a professional artist, educator, and judge, I assessed the success of each contestant's submission in portraying the contest's theme. Looking at both technical and conceptual aspects, I began to analyze each piece for correct uses of the formal elements of art: color, shape, unity, balance, emphasis, ease of thought, execution, and accessibility, taking into consideration the contestants' age category.

Now, more than ever, compassion and understanding is needed in our lives. We are living in unprecedented times where multiple crises plague our world, from poverty, to discrimination and injustice, to housing insecurities, to famine, to wars, all the while dealing with an on-going pandemic.

Compassionate actions are taught to and observed by children and youth. The children and youth entries exemplify how they are actively learning about compassion as they navigate ways to articulate it in an artistic manner. Once completing this process, they are able to better explain themselves and their feelings, as well as teach others to do the same. Children are much more compassionate and caring by nature, and to have them be able to clearly grasp the concept and explain it allows their community to thrive.

This contest also served as a reminder to adults. The adults that were around the children and youth as they created their work were surely reminded of various ways they themselves could be more compassionate and caring towards those around them. As for participating adults, such as contestants, volunteers, event coordinators, or judges, they were able to re-discover art as a brilliant avenue of self expression, empathy, and mental healing.

When viewing children and youth entries, adults can reflect on an ever-pure worldview that exemplifies compassion in daily life.

The contest entries clearly revealed the artists' priorities in living life compassionately and conducting oneself with empathy in mind on a daily basis, thus proving that compassion and kindness are a lifestyle and a daily choice.

By presenting the theme artistically, the genuineness becomes clear to all, and proves that art is a much better vehicle for invoking behavioral change than a lecture on the social and spiritual benefits of kindness and compassion. I am honored to have had the opportunity to be a judge for such an altruistic cause and an impactful international community project.



Winners of 5- 10 years age group



Winners of 11- 15 years age group

Please visit Virtual Art Gallery to view other winners and some inspiring artworks of artists of all ages

<https://www.internationalartcontest.org/art-gallery-part-1-1>

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JAINA Academic Liaison Committee – 2021 Update

By Dr. Sulekh Jain

With the strong support of many philanthropists, dedicated volunteers and well-wishers, the year 2021 has truly been a banner year in the progress of Jain Academic Education. Now Jain studies are offered at nearly 45 + academic institutions! Below is a very brief summary of what has been achieved in 2021.

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New Programs Established in 2021

- a) Four new permanent (endowed) Professorship at:
 - University of Illinois at Champaign, Urbana, IL
 - University of Colorado at Denver, CO
 - University of Connecticut at Storrs, CT
 - University of South Florida at Tampa, FL
- b) Three new permanent (endowed) Post-Doctoral Fellowships at:
 - Rutgers University, NJ
 - University of Pittsburgh, PA
 - Emory University, Atlanta, GA
- c) One 3-year Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ
- d) Two Endowed Jain Study Programs at:
 - University of Florida at Gainesville, FL
 - Cerritos Community College in LA
- e) Two Adjunct Professor programs at:
 - University of Dayton, Dayton, OH
 - Florida Atlantic University, FL
- f) Seven positions at different levels have been advertised so far and more to come soon.
UCLA, Calpoly Pomona, Cal State Univ at Northridge, Rice Univ, Rutgers Univ, Univ of South Florida, Arizona State University
- g) Three Positions to be announced soon at:
University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin, and University of Colorado at Denver

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Prakrit Fellowships Awarded

To educate and train scholars to become fluent in Prakrit (language of Jain agmas), three fellowships (at a cost of \$12000 each) were awarded to 3 PhD scholars to study Prakrit full time for 9 month in India. This makes a total of six scholars to so far.

Initiatives in Jain Studies in Europe and other Countries

- a) **U.K.** - Jain donors have been financially supporting two PhD students at SOAS (London University) and also pledged full funding for next 3 years to the annual conference on Jainism at SOAS.
- b) **Germany** - Dr. Claire Maes (a Jain Scholar at University of Texas Austin, at Austin TX) accepted a senior level academic position at Tübingen University in Germany to start activities and programs in Jainism there.



c) **Belgium** - Funded and established a 3-year program at Professor level in Jain studies at Ghent University in Belgium.

d) **Brazil** – Exploring the possibility of starting a Jain Studies in Portuguese language in August 2022 at a university in Sao Palo, Brazil.

e) **Pakistan:** A few programs to document and catalog Jain Artefacts in Pakistan and offer an introductory course in Urdu language in Pakistan are going to start very soon.

Other new Programs and Initiatives

a) **Symposium on Jain Mathematics:** Held a first ever 3-day symposium on Jain Mathematics. A world class proceeding of this symposium is expected to be out from a US publisher in 2-3 months.

b) **Dating of the birth of Bhagwan Mahavir:** There is a big disagreement (by Jain and Western scholars) about the dating of the birth and Nirvaan of Bhagwan Mahavir Swami. We have recently initiated a high-level research program with reputed scholars (from several countries and disciplines) to remove this confusion, if possible.

c) **International Center for Jainism and Science:** Since there is so much science in Jainism, we have established and funded an International Center in India to explore bridging the gap between modern science and Jain Wisdom. In future emails, we will share its progress and findings.

International School for Jain Studies (ISJS) www.isjs.in

Established in 2004 to educate and train scholars in Jainism for academia, ISJS has been expanding significantly in many directions. So far it has hosted more than 800 scholars from more than 26 universities and many countries.

- a) From New Delhi, its offices have permanently moved to Pune under Amar Prerna Trust of Dr. Abhay Firodia ji.
- b) ISJS is expanding its staff and has already hired several new people (and looking for more)
- c) Signed MOUs of collaborations with several reputed universities in USA, Belgium and India
- d) Regularly holds thematic seminars and conferences
- e) Publishes a quarterly refereed journal
- f) Has authored several books

Plans and Vision in 2022

- a) We already have negotiated the following initiatives and will work to raise needed funds for:
 - Endowed Chair at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel
 - Endowed Chair at University of California at Berkeley
- b) We will work with ISJS and other organizations in India to establish Endowed Chairs in Jainism at least 2 highly rated and prestigious universities in India.
- c) Train a few very promising bright born Jain scholars to compete and occupy the established academic positions in North America, Europe and other countries
- d) Work with universities in USA to get the vacant positions filled and make all the academic positions functional



COMMON PRONUNCIATION MISTAKES IN RECITING JAIN SUTRA

- Dr. Manoj Dharamsi

PART I: SANSKRIT & PRĀKRIT LANGUAGES

(See Appendix for pronunciation of Sanskrit/Prākṛit words written in English)

1. Sanskrit Language

Sanskrit and the languages derived from it follow a strict grammar in which nouns are written differently depending on whether they are used as subject, object, instrumental, possessive, vocative, etc. In Sanskrit, रावण as object is written as रावणम् (रावणने in Gujarati, रावणको in Hindi, etc.). Its position in the sentence does not change the meaning of the sentence. Writing as राम रावणने मारे छे or रावणने राम मारे छे (राम रावणको मारता है, or रावणको राम मारता है) has the same meaning irrespective of the position of the object noun (रावणने/ रावणको) in the sentence. These languages derived from Sanskrit are not position oriented like the English language. In the English language, however, changing the position of Rām and Rāvan in the sentence (changing “Rām kills Rāvan” to “Rāvan kills Rām”) changes the meaning of the sentence.

1.1 In Sanskrit, some nouns are followed by “:” called Visarga which is pronounced as “h”. Visarga followed by ta, cha, and bha/da changes to s, sh, and r respectively as shown in para 1.2 b, c, and d.

1.2 In Sanskrit, examples of two adjacent words joined to make one word are given below.

- a. In the words ending in “m” followed by words starting with vowels a, ā, e, i, ee, o, u, oo: “m” becomes “ma”, “mā” “me”, “mi”, “mee”, “mo”, “mu”, “moo” respectively. (Same rule applies to words ending in “n” and “r” etc. if followed by a word starting with any vowel).

Usabham+Ajiyam = Usabhamajiyam
 उसभम्+अजियम् = उसभमजियम्
 उसभम्+अजियम् = उसभमजियम्

Chandan + Ābharan + Ālankrutah = = Chandanābharanālankrutah
 चंदन+आभरण+आलंकृतः = चंदनाभरणालंकृतः
 चंदन+आभरण+आलंकृतः = चंदनाभरणालंकृतः

Shāntim + Udghoshayāmi = Shāntimudghoshayāmi
 शांतिम्+उद्घोषयामि = शांतिमुद्घोषयामि
 शांतिम्+उद्घोषयामि = शांतिमुद्घोषयामि

In Namutthunam Stotra, “Sivam Ayalam Aruam Anantam Akkhayam Avvābāham Apunarāvitti” become “Siva Mayala Maruā Mananta Makkhaya Mavvābāha Mapunarāvitti”

सिवम्+अयलम्+अरुअम्+अणंतम्+अकखयम्+अव्वाबाहम्+अपुण = सिव-मयल-मरुअ-मणंत-मकखय-मव्वाबाह-मपुण
सिवम्+अयलम्+अरुअम्+अणंतम्+अकखयम्+अव्वाबाहम्+अपुण = सिव-मयल-मरुअ-मणंत-मकखय-मव्वाबाह-मपुण

- b. “:” followed by “t” becomes “s”;

Namah+Te = Namaste

नमः+ते = नमस्ते

नमः+ते = नमस्ते

Nāthāh+Triloka=Nāthāstriloka नाथाः+त्रिलोक= नाथास्त्रिलोक

नाथाः+त्रिलोक = नाथास्त्रिलोक

- c. “:” followed by “ch” becomes “sh”

Grahāh+Chandra = Grahāshchandra

ग्रहाः+चंद्र = ग्रहाश्चंद्र

ग्रहाः+चंद्र = ग्रहाश्चंद्र

d. “:” followed by bha, da, becomes “r”

Shanti**h**+Bhavatu = Shantirbhavatu

Bhakti**h**+Dine = Bhaktirdine

शांतिः+भवतु = शांतिर्भवतु

भक्तिः+दिने = भक्तिर् दिने

शांतिः+भवतु = शांतिर्भवतु

भक्तिः+दिने = भक्तिर् दिने

e. ending in a + u = o. Āchārya+Upādhyāy = Āchāryopādhyāy

आचार्य+उपाध्याय = आचार्योपाध्याय

आचार्य+उपाध्याय = आचार्योपाध्याय

2. Prakrit (also called Prakrut or Ardha Māgadhi) Language

Majority of Jain Sutras are written in Prakrit language. Prakrit language is a simplified version of Sanskrit. It has been designed for laymen with difficult Sanskrit words simplified to enable laymen to pronounce them.

a. Visarga “:” used in Sanskrit is deleted . Prakrit does not have “:”

b. In old days, it was difficult for laymen to pronounce joining of half letter followed by another different letter (e.g., “r” and “ma” in Dharma). In Prakrit, it was modified by changing the previous different half letter to the same as the next letter. Some common Sanskrit to Prakrit modification examples are given below:

Dharma → Dhamma

Sarva → Savva

Karma → Kamma

Bhakti → Bhatti

Kalyān → Kallān

Nirmal → Nimmal

धर्म → धम्म

सर्व → सव्व

कर्म → कम्म

भक्ति → भत्ति

कल्याण → कल्लाण

निर्मल → निम्मल

धर्म → धम्म

सर्व → सव्व

कर्म → कम्म

भक्ति → भत्ति

कल्याण → कल्लाण

निर्मल → निम्मल

PART II: COMMON MISTAKES IN PRONUNCIATION OF JAIN SUTRA

(See Appendix for pronunciation of Sanskrit/Prakrit words written in English)

a. In Navkār Mantra, very common mistake is pronouncing “Savva Pāva Panāsano”. Pāvap (not Pāva) means sin. Pāvap Panāsano means destroyer of sins. Correct pronunciation is “Savva Pāvap Panāsano”

सव्व पाव पणासणो in incorrect. Pronounce सव्व पावप्पणासणो

सव्व पाव पणासणो is incorrect. Pronounce सव्व पावप्पणासणो

b. Ichchhāmi Khamāsama**no** is very commonly pronounced as Ichchhāmi Khamāsano Correct pronunciation is “Ichchhāmi Khamāsama**no**”

ઇચ્છામિ ખમાસણો is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is ઇચ્છામિ ખમાસમણો

इच्छामि खमासणो is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is इच्छामि खमासमणो

c. Not pronouncing h for “:” at the end of a word in Sanskrit Sutra.

Unfortunately, not pronouncing the “h” sound for “:” after words in Sanskrit Sutra (Bhruhad Shānti, Bhaktāmar, Laghu Shanti, Arahanto, Shivamastu, Namorhat, etc.) is common. Visarga “:” written in Sanskrit Sutra should be pronounced as “h”.

d. Miss-pronouncing words in Sanskrit Sutra in some cases results in incorrect meaning. The last stanza of Arahanto Sutra, “Paramesthinah Pratinam Kurvantu vo Mangalam” (परमेष्ठिनः प्रतिदिनम् कुर्वतु वो मंगलम्) means Paramesthini do mangal to us every day. Pronouncing it as “Paramesthinam Pratinam Kurvantu vo Mangalam” (परमेष्ठिनम् प्रतिदिनम् कुर्वतु वो मंगलम्) can mean (we) do Mangal to Paramesthini !

In अरहन्तो सूत्र, परमेष्ठिनः is correct, परमेष्ठिनम् is incorrect
In अरहन्तो सूत्र, परमेष्ठीनः is correct, परमेष्ठीनम् is incorrect

e. In Bruhad Shānti, “Shāntir-Bhavatu” (Shanti:+Bhavatu) means let there be peace. Pronouncing it as “Shāntira.. Bhavatu” (Shanti:+Abhavatu) can mean let there be NO peace.

In बृहद शान्ति, pronounce शांतिर्भवतु, NOT शांतिर..भवतु (which can mean शांतिः अभवतु)
In बृहद शान्ति, pronounce शांतिर्भवतु, NOT शांतिर..भवतु (which can mean शांतिःअभवतु)

f. In Namorhat Sutra, “Namorhat” is generally mispronounced as “Namorat” or “Namorath” It is a salute to Panch Paramesthini starting with “Namah Arhat” which means we salute to Arihant. Joining of “Namah” and “Arhat” is “Namorhat”, not “Namorat” or “Namorath”.

In नमोर्हत सूत्र, pronounce नमोर्हत्, not नमोरथ् or नमोरत्
In नमोर्हत सूत्र, pronounce नमोर्हत्, not नमोरथ् or नमोरत्

g. In Sarva Mangal Sutra, pronouncing “Sarva Dharmānam” (singular) is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is “Sarva Dharmānām” (plural). (meaning; in all religions (plural); in all religion (singular) is grammatically incorrect).

In सर्व मंगल, धर्माणाम् is incorrect, correct pronunciation is धर्माणाम्
In सर्व मंगल, धर्माणम् is incorrect, correct pronunciation is धर्माणाम्

h. Pronouncing Prakrit words incorrectly as original Sanskrit words. Correct Prakrit words are shown in Part I, paragraph 2b. Common mistakes include pronouncing “Sarva” instead of “Savva” in Navkār Mantra; pronouncing “Kalyān” instead of “Kallān” in Uvasaggaharam; etc.

In नवकार मंत्र, pronounce “सव्व”. Pronouncing “सर्व” is incorrect;
In नवकार मंत्र, pronounce “सव्व”. Pronouncing “सर्व” is incorrect;

In उवसग्गहरे, pronounce “कल्याण”. Pronouncing “कल्याण” is incorrect.
In उवसग्गहरे, pronounce “कल्याण”. Pronouncing “कल्याण” is incorrect.

i. Mispronouncing Short and long letters (ह्रस्व/दीर्घ, ह्रस्व/दीर्घ)

1. In “Siddha” (or, in Siddhā, Siddhe, etc.), first letter “Si” should be pronounced as “Si” (short, Rhasva), and Not as “See” (long, Deergha).). “Siddha” is correct; “Seeddha” is incorrect.

Pronounce सिद्ध, सिद्धा, सिद्धे with ह्रस्व सि, and NOT with दीर्घ सी as सीद्ध, सीद्धा, सीद्धे
Pronounce सिद्ध, सिद्धा, सिद्धे with ह्रस्व सि, and NOT with दीर्घ सी as सीद्ध, सीद्धा, सीद्धे

Unfortunately, this is a common mistake, and it is mispronounced in number of CDs.

2. In Bruhad Shānti, pronouncing Streeloka is incorrect; the correct pronunciation is Striloka.

Joining of visarga “:” and “Triloka” is “Striloka”, not “Streeloka”

In બ્રહ્મ શાન્તિ, સ્ત્રીલોક is incorrect, Correct pronunciation is સ્ત્રિલોક
In બ્રહ્મ શાન્તિ, સ્ત્રીલોક is incorrect, Correct pronunciation is સ્ત્રિલોક

3. In Shivamastu Sutra (Also included in Bruhad Shānti), pronouncing “Bhutaganāha” or “Bhutaganā” is incorrect; the correct pronunciation is “Bhootaganāh” or “Bhootaganāh”.

In શિવમસ્તુ and બ્રહ્મ શાન્તિ, ભુતગણ is incorrect, Correct pronunciation is ભૂતગણહ / ભૂતગણહ
In શિવમસ્તુ and બ્રહ્મ શાન્તિ, ભુતગણ is incorrect, Correct pronunciation is ભૂતગણહ / ભૂતગણહ

j Not pronouncing dot (Bindi) on letters.

1. In Logassa Sutra, there is bindi (dot) at the end of names of Tirthankars which needs pronouncing short “m” after Tirthankar’s name, making it as an object being saluted. Not pronouncing short “m” will change the meaning. For example, “Mallim Vande” means we salute (bow down to) Mallināth; where as “Malli Vande” can mean Mallināth salutes.

In લોગસ, pronounce મલ્લિમ્ વંદે, NOT મલ્લિ વંદે (which can mean Mallināth salutes).
In લોગસ, pronounce મલ્લિમ્ વંદે, NOT મલ્લિ વંદે (which can mean Mallināth salutes).

Similarly, in Logassa Sutra, pronounce Santim, Kunthum, Nemim (સંતિમ્, કુંથુમ્, નેમિમ્)

2. In Annattha Sutra, it is incorrect to pronounce “Ehi Ägārehi” instead of the correct pronunciation which is “Ehim Ägārehim”. Pronouncing “Suhumehi” is incorrect, correct pronunciation is “Suhumehim”. Also, pronouncing “Sanchālehi” is incorrect, correct pronunciation is “Sanchālehim”.

In અન્નત્થ સૂત્ર, એહિ આગારેહિ is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is એહિમ્ આગારેહિમ્
Also, સુહુમેહિ is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is સુહુમેહિમ્
સંચાલેહિ is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is સંચાલેહિમ્

In અન્નત્થ સૂત્ર, એહિ આગારેહિ is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is એહિમ્ આગારેહિમ્
Also, સુહુમેહિ is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is સુહુમેહિમ્
સંચાલેહિ is incorrect. Correct pronunciation is સંચાલેહિમ્

3. In the second stanza of Namutthunam, “Sayansam Buddhānām” is incorrectly pronounced as “Sayansa Buddhānām”. Pronounce “Sayansam”, not “Sayansa”.

In નમુત્થુણં સૂત્ર, pronounce સયંસમ્ not સયંસ
In નમુત્થુણં સૂત્ર, pronounce સયંસમ્ not સયંસ

Acknowledgement: I am very thankful to the Jain Scholar **Samirbhai Shah** for reviewing this article.

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Cycle of Birth and Rebirth

By Himanshu Gandhi



Himanshu is based in Boston, MA and is an avid follower of Jainism. He considers himself as an Atmarthi - one whose sole purpose is to attain solace within. He is extremely fortunate to have received invaluable guidance from Pandit Shri Dr. Hukamchand Bharill ji, and inspiration from Pujya Gurudev Kanji Swami ji. He can be reached at h.gandhi@samved.com.

O

Pranam Prabhu

That which is meant to be

Only such will transpire always |

No one is the doer or supporter

Every act transpires on its own, every single time ||1||

I

(From times eternal every aspect of everything is perfectly preset and will transpire exactly as meant to be. Such is based purely on the preset choreographed change of infinite qualities within each substance, and there is no other doer or supporter of any change. Each substance is perfectly independent, self-contained and absolutely self-sufficient.)

T

Neither any living being nor non-living matter

Stops any transient from transpiring |

Each and every transient is perfectly independent

It comes about on its own volition at a set time ||2||

A

(Every living being is simply a pure knower. It only knows of its transient state/Paryay. As such it does not, and cannot, interfere with its progression, to avert, delay or change it in any which way. Every non-living matter also goes through a preset change. Every transient state of any matter, even though is borne-off of the immutable core/Dravya, is perfectly independent both from the core and from any other transient state. It transpires exactly as meant to be on its own volition, at a preset time from times eternal.)

U

Even though I am

In each of my transient state |

I don't reduce or increase

I remain immutable in all three tenses of time ||3||

D

(I am the immutable perfect core/Dravya. Every transient state is borne-off of me and is the exact copy of an infinitesimal part of me. As such I have not lost anything with the transient state. Nor is there any way that anything can be added into me or reform me in any which way. I have never changed from times eternal and will remain the same eternally.)

D

Do not perceive fault anywhere

Perceive everything as appropriate |

I am the ultimate substance

Each thing is absolutely perfect across the entire universe ||4||

W

(With the absolute acceptance of true nature of things comes the realization that nothing is ever amiss in the entire universe. There is absolutely nothing that is ever wrong. As such, I don't perceive any fault anywhere and every change anywhere is simply perceived as that which was exactly as meant to be. I am the ultimate substance in the universe, for me. And in the very same way you are the ultimate substance for yourself. Perfect in every respect. Further, every aspect of everything is absolutely perfect, exactly as meant to be, there is no error, no random or unexplained event. Everything is absolutely known to each Omniscient from times eternal.)



Perspective of perfect core remains constant
With the perception of own eternal reality I
Indescribably blissful experience of Self goes about effortlessly
Experience of intrinsic eternal core goes about repeatedly ||5||

(With the realization of my eternal reality comes staunch understanding that everything is perfect at its own core. As such my perspective remains centered on that perfection. And does not sway into perceiving from the transient, which arises out of unawareness, resulting in expectations, anxiety, and grief. The dividends of Self-realization are immense; perfect bliss and perfect peace. Such comes about effortlessly and is experienced every single time when I am in tuned with my Self, as such is my true intrinsic nature. This comes about repeatedly as nothing outside of me remains of interest. When there is nothing outside that holds my attention, it naturally reverts in to Self.)

Perception of my reality goes about effortlessly
It matters not if I remain in the cycle of birth-rebirth I
I remain just a knower perceiver
Immersed in pure awareness, absolute knowledge and pure bliss ||6||

(Perception of my eternal reality goes about naturally without any effort, as there is no desire or any thought to hold me back away from Self. It matters not if I remain in the current human form or in the cycle of birth-rebirth, for all of that is simply independent of me and has no bearing on me whatsoever. I remain just a knower- perceiver, a perfectly detached witness of everything. With such I remain immersed in my intrinsic eternal qualities of pure awareness, absolute knowledge, pure bliss and perfect peace.)

There is nothing that remains to do through me
Whether I remain or not in this mortal body I
Absolving myself from all acts I have nothing to do
With the cycle of birth-rebirth ||7||

(As I remain in perfect sync with my eternal reality there remains nothing on my To-Do list. I have realized that every aspect of everything will go about perfectly fine without my involvement, as I was never involved in anything, and cannot ever make anything happen, or stop or even delay anything from transpiring. Thereby I absolve myself from all external activities beyond my core function of pure awareness and have nothing to do with the cycle of birth-rebirth. It matters not to me an iota if or when I gain freedom from the cycle, as I remain devoid of any concern.)

Absolving myself from all acts I have nothing to do with the cycle of birth-rebirth ||
Absolving myself from all acts I have nothing to do with the cycle of birth-rebirth ||

ભવ ભવાંતર

પ્રણામ પ્રભુ

જે જે યોગ્ય

થાય તે તે સર્વથા ।

કર્તા ન ધર્તા કોઈ રે

થાય કાર્ય આપોઆપ નિત્યથા ॥૧॥



Z

ન જીવ ન અજીવ
રોકે કદી કોઈ પર્યાય ને ।
છે પ્રત્યેક પર્યાય સ્વતંત્ર
ઉપજે સ્વયમેવ નિશ્ચિત સમય ને ॥૨॥

O

હું છું ભલે
પ્રત્યેક મારી પર્યાય માં ।
ના ધટું ના વધું
રહું અખંડ ત્રણેય કાળ માં ॥૩॥

I

T

જાણું ન દોષ ક્યાંય પણ
જણાય સર્વ યોગ્ય રે ।
હું છું પરમ અર્થ
છે પ્રત્યેક દ્રવ્ય સ્વયંસિદ્ધ લોકાલોક રે ॥૪॥

A

U

દ્રવ્ય દ્રષ્ટિ રહે સદા
જાણી પરમ પારિણામિક ભાવ રે ।
અનુપમ અનુભવ ચાલે સહજ
રમણું સ્વભાવ વારંવાર રે ॥૫॥

U

સ્વરૂપ અવલોકન સહજ ચાલે
ભલે રહ્યો સંસાર માં ।
જ્ઞાતા દ્રષ્ટા રહું નિત
ચિદ્ જ્ઞાન આનંદ માં ॥૬॥

D

ન બાકી રહ્યું કશું મારા થકી કરવાનું
રહું ના રહું આ દેહ માં ।
બની કૃતકૃત્ય ભવ ભવાંતર થી રહ્યો
વાસ્તો મને કોઈ ના ॥૭॥

W

બની કૃતકૃત્ય ભવ ભવાંતર થી રહ્યો વાસ્તો મને કોઈ ના ॥
બની કૃતકૃત્ય ભવ ભવાંતર થી રહ્યો વાસ્તો મને કોઈ ના ॥



Book Review: Atmasiddhi Shastra – Six Spiritual Truths of the Soul

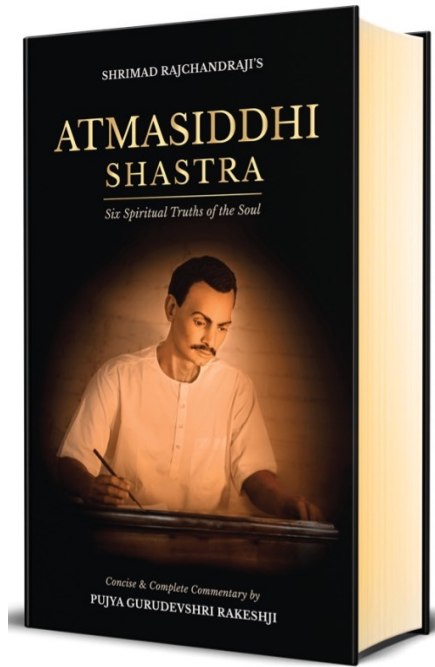
By Dilip V Shah



Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Constitution Committee and 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.

("Atmasiddhi Shastra – Six Spiritual Truths of the Soul" is a Concise & Complete Commentary on Shrimad Rajchandraji's signature creation by Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji. Published by Harper Collins (India) Available on Amazon)

To celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Shrimadji's magnum opus – Atmasiddhi Shastra, the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur (SRMD) has presented this elegantly produced spiritual guide for the English speaking world by his ardent follower Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji.



The Atmasiddhi Shastra is in fact a version of the letter Shrimadji wrote to one of his followers - Lalluji Muni. Battling a long illness, Lalluji feared he was nearing the end of life without grasping the essence of religion needed for his salvation. He wrote letters pleading Shrimadji to enlighten him with that kind of benevolent knowledge. As an act of benevolent compassion, Shrimadji wrote him a letter explaining six characteristics of the soul - understanding of which is the key to salvation with advice to commit it to memory and daily recital. A copy of the letter reached Saubhagbhai, an elderly associate of Shrimadji who found it extremely beneficial but too arduous to memorize. He suggested to Shrimadji that it will be easier to remember if it were poetry. Again Shrimadji acquiesced and in just one sitting penned the most beautiful 142 stanzas under the title Atmasiddhi that has been known to the world as Atmasiddhi Shastra.

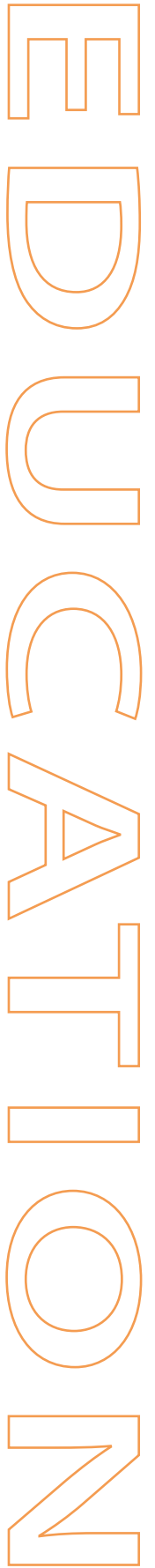
It is a work of beauty in poetry that rhymes. The discourse proceeds in a logical manner without using complicated words. There are several versions of it on YouTube in melodious and haunting tune that pulls in the listener and awakes him.

Shrimadji had developed a wide and all-encompassing view of the six main philosophies of Indian tradition:

1. Chārvāk
2. Jainism
3. Buddhism
4. Nyāy-Vaisheshi
5. Sāṅkhya- yog
6. Purva Mimāṃsā- Uttar Mimāṃsā

The six fundamentals are the very basis on which each Philosophy builds its opinion. The genius of Atmasiddhi is in integrating and weaving them in expounding the six fundamentals. It logically arrives at the supreme truth by examining all perspectives. Shrimadji accomplishes that without mentioning any philosophy by name, denigrating, or endorsing anyone. In fact, the entire text does not name any religion by name. The focus is on self-realization and self-realization alone.

The central theme of the Atmasiddhi – the six steps – has appeared in much earlier Jain writing by the sages like Acharyashri Siddhasen Divakar in Sanmati Prakaran during fourth-fifth century, the seventeenth century Mahopdhyay Yashovijayji in *Adhyatma Sār*, Kundkundacharya -Digambar intellectual giant of the first century, and



Siddhant Chakravarty Nemichandra of the 10th century. The same six points were also the theme of the doubts harbored by Gandhars as they first approached Lord Mahavir 2600 years ago as famously documented in Gandharvād. Shrimadji also used Bhagwan Mahavir’s question-and-answer mode of teaching to instill divine knowledge. Stanza 134 reaffirms “*all the enlightened ones of the past, present and future have attained, do attain and will attain liberation in the same way, there is no difference in the path*” indicating Science of the soul is sort of like the laws of nature. They are eternal.

In the early part of 2021, Gurudev Rakeshji gave discourses on Atmasiddhi at Dharampur in English under the title of Rajgita. This undertaking by Gurudev for the benefit of the younger generation who were just beginning the study of Atmasiddhi was a monumental event. The discourses lasted for nine months covering 125 hours. Due to numerous requests, this book was prepared as a capsule version of those lectures to coincide with the worldwide celebration of the 125th year of the birth of the epic poem scheduled for November of 2021.

The book is divided into 12 chapters. After the introductory chapter, the next two chapters describe attributes of a religious bigot – a Matārthi – who is incapable of leaving behind his opinions to learn something new for the benefit of his soul and attributes of -a true seeker – an Ātmārthi seeking self-realization. The fourth chapter is devoted to naming the six fundamentals: Soul exists, Soul is eternal; Soul is the doer of Karma; Soul is the receiver of the fruits of karma; there is liberation, and there is a path to liberation. The six fundamentals are presented in the questions and answers format and occupy the next six chapters, followed by a chapter where the disciple, having been enlightened expresses his gratitude to the guru and the all-important conclusion is the last chapter. Here the author recaps the pitfalls for the seekers and also enumerates seven cardinal virtues of the seeker. At the end of every stanza, there is cute little a QR code that takes the readers to Gurudev’s Rajgita lecture of that particular stanza. Neat!

Since the book is aimed at the English-speaking world, Gurudev has presented each stanza as a separate chapter, painstakingly providing the meaning of every word of the original Gujarati stanzas even if the word appears again and again. Following the meanings of the word is a very helpful pronunciation guide and of course, the meaning of every stanza in two or three pages totalling just over five hundred pages. A challenging task considering his declaration that for his Ph. D. thesis on Atmasiddhi, at over three thousand pages, he only stopped, he was not finished!

Be that as it may, the book is certainly a strong primer for studying Jain Dharma for which sadly there is so little available in English. SRMD is planning to issue versions of this book in major world languages and that will soon place it on a “must-read” list worldwide.

The book has received numerous accolades from politicians, religious leaders, and scholars and is high on the best sellers list. Over 100,000 copies were printed in the first edition indicating enormous confidence by the publishers. It is printed on incredibly light FSC paper that ensures responsible forest management. The royalties from the book are earmarked for supporting rural education.



“Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra serves as a beacon to lead one out from the depths of darkness. All that is required now, is the willingness to be led.”

- Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji



Ahimsa Meals and Fasting Committee: 2021 Program Update

By Christopher Jain Miller, PhD



Christopher Jain Miller completed his Ph.D. in the Study of Religion at the University of California, Davis. He now serves as the Bhagwan Mallinath Assistant Professor of Jainism at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He is a chairman of JAINA's "Thanksgiving Meals and Fasting Committee". (Christopher.Miller@lmu.edu)

In celebration of the 400th Thanksgiving Day, this past year 2021, JAINA's Ahimsa Meals and Fasting Committee had proposed a 3-part program:

- 1) Serve 100,000 animal-free meals to those in need beginning on Ahimsa Weekend, Oct 1-3, 2021, until Thanksgiving Day.
- 2) Host a global Zoom webinar on Ahimsa Weekend to educate the American public about Thanksgiving history, purpose, animal cruelty, etc. with speeches by speakers from inside and outside of Jain community and encourage people to sign-up to celebrate Thanksgiving Day in a non-violent, compassionate way.
- 3) Commit 1,000 people to do a full or partial fast on Thanksgiving Day 2021.

The purpose was to bring awareness in the global community about animal cruelty and demonstrate that there is an alternate, compassionate way to celebrate Thanksgiving Day.

From March until November, I as a committee chair and co-chair Dilip Parekh worked closely with JAINA president Mahesh Wadher and other members of JAINA's leadership team toward meeting these goals. We are glad to share the results of this program with you in this article. We would like to thank the global Jain community for their unending support and enthusiasm for this initiative, as well as our collaborators at the Global Jain Network and the Jain Vegan Initiative who helped spread the message.

1) Serving Meals to the Needy

With very enthusiastic support from people like you, we surpassed our goal of serving 100,000 meals to the needy. The final count is 147, 854. There were several major players who helped us make this goal a reality. **Special thanks to Joy of Sharing Foundation**, Dr. Nitin Shah, Dr. Jasvant Modi, Dr. Narendra Parson, Swatantra Jain, and Varun Gandhi for their hard work and dedication. **They alone**

served an astonishing 25,000 meals in Southern California between Ahimsa weekend and Thanksgiving Day and were one of the first to commit toward making this project a reality.



JOSF volunteers preparing the meal

We would also like to thank all the Jain Centers that participated in this project. Among them are the following who served food to those in need:

1. Jain Center of Northern California under the leadership of Biren Shah and Girish Shah served 2,200 meals



JCNC Volunteers packaging food items

2. Greater Phoenix Center that served 1,000 meals under the leadership of Kiran Shah
3. New Jersey Center that served 550 meals under the leadership of Jigar Shah
4. Jain Society of Ottawa that served 200 meals in partnership with the Sai Center of Ottawa
5. Jain Center of Connecticut that served 186 meals as part of their pathshala program
6. TCCOP/ACC (Los Angeles) that served 60 meals to the needy in their homes



A Grateful beneficiary of JCNC's compassion



Pathshala Students - Jain Center of Connecticut

In addition to these incredible on the ground efforts, we also collaborated with Food for Life Global (FFLG), a non-profit organization that served Jain vegan meals to those in need around the world for 50 cents per meal! Hundreds of Jains and non-Jains from around the world made generous contributions to FFLG which enabled us to exceed our goal. The individual and corporate donations to FFLG totaled 117,078 meals! FFLG was recommended to us by Dhanesh Kothari, a member of the Swiss Jain community who was familiar with their good work. You can find more information about FFLG at <http://www.ffl.org> We interviewed Paul Rodney Turner, Executive Director of FFLG. You can read the interview in the Conversation section of this magazine.

Global Zoom Webinar

On October 3rd on Ahimsa Weekend, we hosted a global zoom webinar featuring thought leaders who spoke about Jain philosophy, compassion, environmentalism, and nutrition in reference to the Thanksgiving Meal program. I emceed the event, while Mahesh Wadher, Gary Francione, Luvin Arms Animal Sanctuary, and John Pierre gave great presentations that inspired attendees to celebrate a less violent Thanksgiving and to get involved in the initiatives that would follow. You can watch the full event here: <https://youtu.be/ZdG0Jqe3sDM>

Committing People to Fast on Thanksgiving 2021

Though we had aimed to have 1,000 people do full or partial fast on Thanksgiving Day, we had 600 people committed to do so from within and outside of the Jain community from all over the world. However, we understand that many Jain Centers have their own programs to do prayers and do partial fast such as Ayambil on Thanksgiving Day, which may not have been reported to us. Given that this was our first year and that we spread the message largely through word of mouth, we are happy with the initial success.

“Fasting” meant that people could choose to skip one meal, do Ayambil, skip two meals, have a vegan Thanksgiving, or perform a full fast. We gave many options as we know that many people had already made plans for the holiday and wanted everyone to be able to participate in what we framed as the “Great Thanksgiving Celebration of Compassion”. We even hosted a promotional event the night before Thanksgiving in collaboration with the Global Jain Network and the Jain Vegan Initiative where prayers for the slaughtered turkeys were read and a host of guest speakers for the Jain Center in Houston shared some words of compassion before ending with a Jaap led by Sunny Jain.

List of all participants in the Ahimsa meals and fasting programs is available at:

[https://www.jaina.org/page/Ahimsa Meals and Fasting Committee](https://www.jaina.org/page/Ahimsa_Meals_and_Fasting_Committee)

A big thanks to the Global Jain community and our allies for all the support in making the Ahimsa Meals and Fasting initiatives a huge success. We look forward to working with you all in the future to continue to spread the message of non-violence and compassion to the world. We hope that all of us will continue to think about Thanksgiving Day as a “Day of Compassion” and make this world a better place - not only for humans but for all living beings!

JAINA Women's Committee

By Dr. Mamta Shaha



Dr. Mamta Shaha is a board-certified Ophthalmologist (Bombay University) and a board-certified pediatrician (USA) She is Assistant Professor on the faculty of NYU medical center, New York. She is actively involved with JAINA for more than 25 years. Currently she serves as co-chair of the Women's Committee and chairs the Media Production Committee. She is member of International Council for women where she actively promotes Jain values.

JAINA's Women's Committee was established in October 2015 and became operational in January 2016.

After conducting women related sessions at every Jaina Convention since 2005, It became apparent that women of Jain community were not immune to common problems faced by women of other communities. Women's problems are unique and not acknowledged in today's patriarchal society. Though Jain community is highly accomplished and well placed, women's problems are usually ignored. There is a tendency to sweep them under the rug. In 2015 JAINA convention session, we came across dire problems of some young women contemplating suicide. Those women were counselled by us, and we could avert the dire situation for them. This made it urgent to have a platform for women at national level.

Developing an understanding of self and standing up for one's rights is the inner strength every woman needs. With the intention of providing that inner strength to every Jain woman, JAINA women's committee was established.

Our Mission

- To provide a platform to all women followers of Jain way of life to organize as a group.
- To promote personal growth, social wellbeing, and spiritual progress of all
- To promote peace and harmony at different levels - family, community, nation and international through nonviolence/Ahimsa
- To collaborate with other women groups to work towards common goal of promoting peace and equality for women.

National Committee Chairs:

Dr. Mamta Shaha and Pramodaben Chitrabhanu

National Committee Members:

Padma Shetti (New York), Madhuben Sheth (Atlanta), Ujwal Shinghavi (Houston), Shobha Vora (San Francisco), Bakulaben Maniar, (Los Angeles), Kalpana Sanghvi (New York), Shilpa Salgia (Calgary, Canada) and Kirtida Shah (Toronto, Canada)

Local Chapters

Since 2016 we have established local chapters at many major Jain Centers across US and Canada. This makes us globally relevant, socially responsible, and locally reachable. Our purpose is to have a platform where women can gather, discuss everyday issues. They can be involved in creative activities, network and socialize in an intellectual way. As women we must learn to value ourselves. It does not depend on how someone else thinks of me but what do I think of myself, counts the most.

The local center women's groups are active in having different activities like donation of warm clothes to homeless, providing vegetarian food during Thanksgiving to soup kitchens and shelters. Celebrating Women's Day, women health and yoga day, seminars on women related issues etc.



(Houston Women's Group making blessings bags for homeless)

Our local chapters have achieved tremendous success in organizing and helping women in different ways. We have seen the difference it has made for women. The response and camaraderie were overwhelming. Women had sense of belonging and enthusiasm of working together and helping each other.



(JCA Women's Group in a TaiChi Session)

The local programs were affected after the pandemic. It became difficult to gather for activities. So, we decided to go virtual. Women quickly adopted to this mode of operation. We achieved great success in organizing ongoing quarterly zoom conferences with tremendous attendance nationwide. We had 4 quarterly conferences in year 2020, and 2021 with attendance up to 150-200 women attending nationwide.

Major Achievements

Our biggest achievements are organizing highly successful women conferences during 2017, 2019, and 2021 JAINA conventions having world renowned speakers.

In 2017 Jaina convention we had very first half day conference on overall empowerment of women.

This included the topics of women's physical health, financial health, emotional health, and spiritual health. We also had women and Jain ecology with vegetarian and vegan diet information. The speakers were distinguished women professors in their fields, well placed academically.




The success of our first conference during Jaina convention gave us the confidence to continue the tradition.



In 2019 we had the half day conference on "Cruelty Free Products for everyday use" It was very successful as we had speakers who were manufacturers of these products. The highlight of the conference was the keynote by PETA President Ingrid Newkirk. A follow up email from her promising support for future endeavors boosted our confidence.

In 2021 JAINA convention we were allotted the half day for the conference. It was virtual a convention and we did well with five hours of continuous presentations and having all audience staying with us through the whole conference.

Women's Conference
July 5th, 12-5pm EST

 Sister Shivani Women's Conference Keynote Speaker	 Vinita Bali Women's Conference Motivational Speaker	
 Indrayani Patani Law and Women Empowerment	 Dr. Jay Apte Superfoods and Kitchen Pharmacy	 Hemal Patani Internet and Cyber Security

We started with spiritual leader Sister Shivani addressing the audience. She talked about how to assert yourself and stand up for your rights. Then we had prominent Corporate CEO Vinita Bali talking

about the balancing of career and family. After that, Indrayani Patani, a lawyer from Indra with background in international and Indian laws, talked about issues facing women globally. Then Ayurvedic doctor Dr. Jay Apte, with ayurvedic practice of more than 20 years in this country gave us better understanding of Kitchen pharmacy - the spices in kitchen that can be used as medicine. Finally, we had Hemal Patani talk on the Cyber Security who is a vice president at Oracle. All talks were very much liked and appreciated.

Our half day conferences during JAINA conventions are going to be a regular program. We want all of you to join as we all look forward to making it better every time.

Future Plans

We have started special interest groups of women. This will give great networking opportunities to women with similar interests. In this regard we have established two groups:

1) Digital Literacy Group - Hemal Patani is the group leader. Under her leadership we will have ongoing seminars and workshops on understanding the digital media. We are planning on having hands on help with digital media for women or anyone who needs it at local center levels once the pandemic is over and we can gather together.

2) Financial Literacy Group - This group will be led by Co-leaders Lina Shah and Dipali Dalal. There will be ongoing seminars on finance related issues for women. We are also planning on starting a course on "Finances 101" for women on a regular basis.

We have plans to start a Medical Group, a Nutrition Group and an Artistes' Group.

We encourage all women to connect and join the groups of your interest.

International Scene

I have joined the international women's coordinating council of Religions for Peace as a Jain representative from JAINA. Religions for Peace is the biggest international organization of religions. It works in collaboration with The United Nations. It is sometimes referred as United Nations of Religions as it has representation from over 72 countries.

I attended three conferences including a World Council held in Germany in 2019. I actively worked with organizers and encouraged them to pick representative from our Jain youth. As a result, our youth representative Harshita Jain was invited to Germany for representing Jain Youth in 2021. You can read about her experience in attending that conference in this issue of Jain Digest in the article titled "*Religions for Peace - Generations in Dialogue*"

In Conclusion

I would like to say the Jain Community is very highly placed with high literacy rate and high regards. Unfortunately, Jain women are not immune from problems like domestic violence, emotional abuse, financial difficulties etc. Please do not ignore them but try to bring them in the open.

**"Human Rights are Women Rights"
We are women and are Proud!!**

Our expectations from JAINA and Jain Community are that people support us in providing recognition and exposure to our activities through their different publications.

We would appeal to all the Directors and Presidents of all the Jain Centers to encourage local women to get involved and form a group.

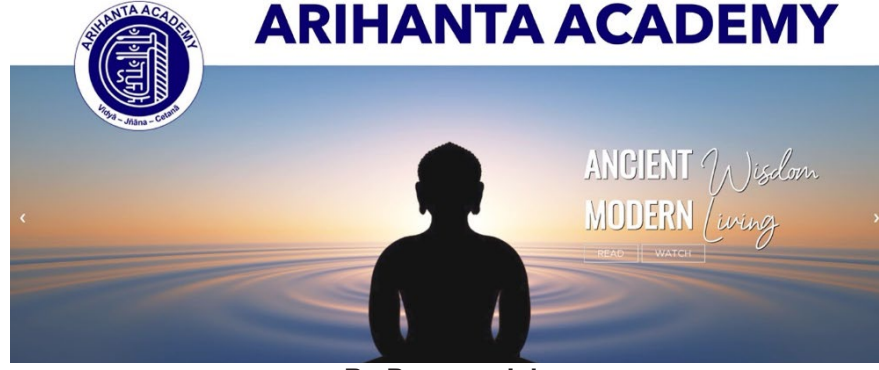
Support the local group.

For more information please contact:
womencommittee@jaina.org

Women belong in all places
where decisions are being
made. ... It shouldn't be
that women are the
exception.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Introducing
ARIHANTA ACADEMY



By Parveen Jain

Ācārya Sushil Kumar (Guru Ji) once said: *“I firmly believe in the profound impact of spirituality on society’s cultural, social, and political fabric. Only ahimsā and peaceful means can provide lasting solutions for human disputes and environmental problems we currently face.... We must create temples of learning by establishing high-quality institution(s) to teach Jain philosophy and promote the esteemed Jain scholarship. This is crucial not only for the flourishing of Jain dharma but for the survival of humanity.”*

Motivated by Guru Ji’s statement, a team of technology and business entrepreneurs and renowned scholars of Jain teachings came together in early 2021 to form a comprehensive online educational institution for Jain studies called **Arihanta Academy**. Arihanta Academy’s vision is to make Jain teachings readily accessible to anyone aspiring to learn their application to daily life or delve into a deeper study of Jain philosophy, history, and anthropology. The teachings are structured for individuals with or without a Jain background.

Beginning as an academy with certificate courses in Jain philosophy and related dharmic, Yogic, and linguistic subjects, the vision for Arihanta Academy is to offer college-level degree-earning courses as the institution marches towards accredited university status in the coming years. While we pursue university accreditation with the appropriate rigor of courses with scholastic richness for higher education, Arihanta Academy will continue to have a channel for junior education.

The wisdom of Lord Tirthankaras, with *ahimsā* and compassion as the foundation of the Jain spiritual edifice and at the heart of Jain philosophy, is as or more relevant today than when it was revealed millennia ago. The world at large is not acquainted with the treasure of the venerated Jain teachings. Arihanta Academy aims to kindle awareness by

democratizing Jain studies worldwide to make this wisdom for wholesome living accessible to everyone.

Arihanta Academy’s curriculum comprises fundamental studies of Jain philosophy as well as the applications of Jain philosophy to all aspects of living. In addition, the institution offers courses on the theory, history, and background of yoga as well as its genuine practice — an essential element of spiritual life and healthy living. The cornerstone of Arihanta Academy’s offerings will be the rigorous teaching of the Jain tradition by experienced and renowned scholars who have excelled in Jain studies and research. There will always be a steadfast emphasis on holistic and genuine Jain studies with no sectarian biases.

The institution will launch on the Mahāvīra Jayanti Day (April 14, 2022) and classes will begin on April 16, 2022. In 2022, we will offer three terms of ten weeks each with eight to ten twenty-hour courses. Each course will comprise ten classes of two hours each to be offered live on either Saturday or Sunday. Each class will be recorded and uploaded on our platform for further learning with on-demand access. We are building our custom learning platform with a state-of-the-art technology. All the details about our vision, plans, courses, faculty, etc. will be available on our website, www.Arihanta-Academy.com that will be unveiled in March 2022.

Founded by Parveen Jain, PhD, a technology entrepreneur and leader; Christopher Miller, PhD, a professor of Jain and Yoga studies; and Dhanesh Kothari, also a technology entrepreneur, and Pramod Patel, a businessman and ardent student and teacher of Shrimad Rajchandra’s teachings, the institution aims to facilitate the application of ancient Jain wisdom to modern living for the betterment of society.

For any further information, please contact Parveen Jain at parveen@arihanta-academy.com

Ruth Bader Ginsburg: Life, Achievements and Legacy

By Reena Shah



Reena is Section Editor of the Inspiration section of Jain Digest. She is a USC graduate and currently teaches English and US History in middle school and high school. Her industry experience includes Market Research, Non-Profit and educational institutions. She practices deeper aspects of spirituality and is a follower of Shrimad Rajchandra Atma Tatva Research Centre, Mumbai.



"Don't be distracted by emotions like anger, envy, resentment. These just zap energy and waste time." – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

A fearless, outspoken, wise, the second woman to serve on the Supreme Court and a pioneering advocate for women's rights, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, was Supreme Court's Feminist and progressive icon, and America's cultural icon whose career changed American society. Ginsburg has been a pioneer for gender equality throughout her distinguished career. While singular in her achievements, she was far from alone in her pursuits and received much support from talented, dedicated women all along the way. Celia Bader provided a strong role model for her daughter at an early age. Ginsburg recalls, "My mother told me two things constantly. One was to be a lady, and the other was to be independent. The study of law was unusual for women of my generation. For most girls growing up in the '40s, the most important degree was not your B.A., but your M.R.S."

Born to Jewish parents in Brooklyn, New York, on March 15, 1933, Ruth earned her Bachelor's degree at Cornell University where she graduated as the highest-ranking female student from her class on June 23, 1954. She married Martin D. Ginsburg, becoming a mother before starting law school at Harvard, where she was one of the few women in her class. Ginsburg transferred to Columbia Law School, where she graduated joint first in her class. During the early 1960s she worked with the Columbia Law School Project on International Procedure, learned Swedish and co-authored a book with Swedish jurist

influenced her thinking on gender equality. She then became a professor at Rutgers Law School and Columbia Law School, teaching civil procedure as one of the few women in her field. While working at the Social Security Administration in Lawton, Oklahoma, she was demoted after her workplace was notified she was pregnant.

With fearlessness life becomes limitless

Fearlessness is an attribute of the soul in Jainism. Jain Philosophy explains that fear is due to illusion or ignorance. This is due to karma based on previous and present thoughts and actions. Ruth's fearless soul inspired millions to stand up for their rights and take charge. She modeled this fearlessness and courage serving as a role model for many. Most of us face our fear that resides within us. It does take effort and courage on an individual's part to develop this fearlessness. If we succeed in cultivating fearlessness, no incident, no external circumstances can strike fear in us. The world knows *Bhagwan Mahavir* as a pioneer of *Ahimsa*. Not many are aware that he is also known as a pioneer of fearlessness (*abhaya*). He had the firm belief that a person afflicted with fear cannot promote *ahimsa*. This principle became an integral part of his way of life. For this reason, he remained alone during the whole span of his penance (spiritual practice). He wandered alone in the jungles, rivers, valleys, hills, caves and empty houses day and night. Fear did not touch him at all. Fearlessness added luster to his spiritual practice.

While enrolled at Harvard Law, the dean invited all nine of the school's female students to dinner, where he reportedly asked them, "Why are you here, taking the place of a man?" She drily replied that she was at Harvard because she wanted to learn more about her husband's work. The other women, giggled in the background at Ruth Bader Ginsburg's response. She responded fearlessly with ease and presence of mind in a way that would make the dean realize the futility of such a question. It is important to note here that she did not lose her cool and answered in a way that her dean would have preferred to hear. She did not like to waste her energy and anger on insignificant things or people. She had that clarity of mind right

Both Ginsburg and her husband were students at Harvard, and while he was receiving treatment for his first diagnosis of cancer, Ginsburg attended class, made notes and dictated papers for both of them. She made the Harvard Law Review. In 1963, Ginsburg became a professor at Rutgers Law School and was one of the twenty female law professors in the country. She was paid less than the average male professors because she had a husband that was also making income. Ginsburg was not deterred by the discrimination she faced, instead it fed her drive to fight against it by proving to society that women could be just as successful as men.

In 1970, she co-founded the Women's Rights Law Reporter, the first law journal that solely focused on the rights of women. From 1972 to 1980, she was the first tenured woman and co-authored the first law school casebook on sex-based discrimination. Before joining the Supreme Court, Ginsburg co-founded the Women's Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union in 1972. She became the general counsel in 1973 and stayed as the director until she was appointed to the Federal Bench in 1980. During this time, she argued and won five gender discrimination cases before the Supreme Court. Fear never bothered her or even come close to her spirits as she rose high in the professional ladder.

On April 14, 1980, Ginsburg was nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for D.C. by President Jimmy Carter. She was confirmed on June 18, 1980 and served until she was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1993 by President Bill Clinton. Ginsburg made sure her voice didn't waver in her position on the Supreme Court. She authored the court's opinion in "United States v. Virginia, "a case that removed Virginia Military Institute's (VMI) male-only admission policy. Ginsburg's writings said VMI did not include "exceedingly persuasive justification" for the policy and that it violated the Equal Protection Clause.

Equality is the essence of Compassion

Jainism believes that each soul is unique and equal and that each has the ability to attain salvation with the right knowledge and opportunity. Bhagwan Mahavir envisioned that both men and women were on an equal footing. The lure of renunciation and liberation attracted women as well. Many women followed Mahavir's path and renounced the world in search of ultimate truth and happiness. Mahavir attracted people from all walks of life, rich and poor, kings and commoners, men and women, princes, and priests, touchable and untouchable. He organized his followers, into a four-fold order, namely monk

(Sadhu), nun (Sadhvi), layman (Shravak), and laywoman (Shravika).

Ruth was an epitome of equal rights through empowerment and education and took that leadership role of leading this initiative. She was never disappointed or gave up because of the several setbacks that she encountered in her life. Her determination, steadfastness, and resilience are the attributes of a soul that help an individual progress in parmarth marg. These attributes are not limited to a religion or a sect, but these prevail across different religions and ethnicities. One can draw inspiration from individuals around them.

She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2002, was named one of the 100 Most Powerful Women in 2009, was one of Time's 100 Most Influential People in 2015 and was the recipient of the Berggruen Prize for Philosophy and Culture in 2019.

In 2020, Ginsburg received the LBJ Foundation's Liberty and Justice for All Award, the World Peace and Liberty Award, a lifetime achievement award from Diane von Furstenberg foundation, and the 2020 Liberty Medal. During her years on the bench, she was a champion of gay rights, women's rights, the poor, and many other marginalized groups. Her compassion for the marginalized groups spoke volumes about her character. Only a compassionate soul can fight for the upliftment of these groups. She believed that these groups deserved equal treatment. Her accomplishments did not deter her from being a confident, fearless, humble, soulful human being.

Popular media, fame and simplicity

Ginsburg rose to fame not only in the legal world and equal rights, but also became an icon of inspiration in the world of media. Her determination, perseverance, and fearlessness were the key attributes to be shown in movies, documentaries, and TV shows. It is remarkable to see that she embraced fame with humility and simplicity. Compassion for all beings was the driving force behind her stinging dissents when she spoke against the wrong doings in society. Ginsburg embraced her pop culture icon status, along with her crown as the "Notorious RBG," a play on late rapper Notorious B.I.G. "They were both from Brooklyn," said Irin Carmon, who co-authored the book "Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg." "But it was also the case that they both used language to protest." Ginsburg got the nickname in 2013 after the Supreme Court invalidated a key part of the Voting Rights Act, and she issued a fiery dissent – likening the curtailment of

voter protection to "throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet." "I think people respond to the notion that somebody can have overcome all of this and then, turned around, finally given a position on the highest court in the land," Carmon said, "and using that power to speak out when things are wrong." Ginsburg and her blistering dissents have inspired T-shirts, tattoos, a species of praying mantis dubbed *Ilomantis ginsburgae*, and even a character on "Saturday Night Live." "It was beyond my wildest imagination that I would one day become the Notorious RBG," Ginsburg said. The nickname Notorious RBG came from a Tumblr post made by NYU Law Student Shana Knizhnik in 2013. She explained that it was the juxtaposition of Ginsburg's small stature and powerful presence that inspired her to create the nickname influenced by Notorious B.I.G.

Equanimity during health crisis

While she was memorialized as a "feminist icon," a "history-making jurist," and as "Notorious RBG," she was also a cancer survivor. Ginsburg was first diagnosed with colon cancer in 1999. While receiving chemotherapy and radiation therapy, she never missed a day on the bench. In 2009, she had surgery for pancreatic cancer and returned to the bench when the Supreme Court went back into session that same month. After being hospitalized in 2018 when she fell and fractured three ribs, a CT scan revealed cancer in her lungs. Over the summer of 2019, Ginsburg completed focused radiation treatment for a pancreatic tumor. In Feb. 2020, her cancer returned, and by May, she started receiving treatment again. Ginsburg passed away the night before Rosh Hashana. "RBG encompasses the true definition of a cancer survivor," Dr. Anne Blaes, director, Cancer Survivorship Services and Translational Research, Masonic Cancer Center at the University of Minnesota, emphasized. "From the time of her diagnosis, she continued to live with her cancer, rarely missing a day of work. She bravely went through multiple surgeries, hospitalizations, and treatments over the course of two decades. She continued to live and work on the bench during that time." Ginsburg perfectly demonstrated to all of us what it means to accept all the physical ailments with sambhaav with equanimity and calm.

One of the other great things with her was that she treated *Kashays* like anger, envy, and resentment as a waste of time and energy. She would stay away from those emotions in order to remain focused on her task and work. This kind of understanding requires a lot of self-introspection and contemplation to be able to have such clear understanding of one's

goal in life. Most of us fall to the "charm" of these *kashays* and accrue *karma*.

Accolades beyond the physical life

She was well remembered by people from all walks of life whose lives she had touched in several ways. According to Rabbi Richard Jacobs, "One of the themes of Rosh Hashanah suggests that very righteous people would die at the very end of the year because they were needed until the very end." While Ginsburg will be remembered for her work on the Supreme Court and fight for equality, she said she would like to be remembered, "as someone who used whatever talent she had to do her work to the very best of her ability. Students around MSU were asked to share words on Ginsburg's passing as well as the legacy she left behind. "Her belief and fight against gender discrimination has led to inspire many females to stand up for their beliefs. She's not the first female to fight against the subject, but she definitely made sure that her voice was never buried, and I respect that from her," Dominic Chavez, theatre sophomore, said. Corbyn Scobee, studio art sophomore, noted the influence Ginsburg had on the LGBT+ community. "She has allowed me the option of marrying whomever I choose. She has allowed me to hold any occupation that I want to work towards. She has allowed me the right to choose which college I want to attend. She has even allowed me to hold my own credit card. She has fought for me to be able to do things without discrimination against my gender or sexual orientation. She has allowed me to live."

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Women's Empowerment in India

Compiled by Reena Shah

Women's empowerment can be defined as promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. It is a fundamental human right that's also key to achieving a more peaceful, prosperous world that equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through the various problems in society.

Women's empowerment and promoting women's rights have emerged as a part of a major global movement and is continuing to break new ground in recent years. Days like "International Women's Empowerment Day" are also gaining momentum.

But despite a great deal of progress, women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence in every part of the world.

Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities, and countries.

When women are living safe, fulfilled, and productive lives, they can reach their full potential. contributing their skills to the workforce and can raise happier and healthier children. They are also able to help fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women.

On one hand, the country is home to a number of feminist icons like Kamla Bhasin, who has been advocating for female education since the seventies, but on the other, around 93 women are raped in India every day. In addition, even in 2019, nonconsensual sex between a husband and wife is not considered rape according to India's penal code. It is also estimated that 120,000 Indian women a year will be victims of domestic violence.

Fortunately, several organizations are tirelessly working to put an end to gender inequality in India. These organizations fighting for women's empowerment in India are dedicated to uplifting and protecting women.

Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

Of the female labor force in India, more than 94 percent of workers make their living in the unorganized sector. Yet this demographic largely remains invisible due to the self-employed nature of their work. Since these women are not part of the mainstream salaried workforce, they do not have access to welfare benefits that the laborers in the traditional workforce do, leaving them unprotected.



Incorporated in 1972, the Self-Employed Women's Association, or SEWA, is a trade union made up of poor and self-employed female workers that earn a living through self-run small businesses or their personal labor. SEWA aims to organize women so that they can attain full employment and all its benefits including social security, which is defined as health care, childcare, and shelter. SEWA stimulates full employment and female self-reliance by offering a number of services including health care, childcare, banking through the Sewa Bank (a cooperative bank with credit and finance services), insurance via VimoSEWA (SEWA insurance), legal services and housing.

Snehalaya

Snehalaya translates to "home of love" and is an NGO that was founded in 1989 in the city of Ahmednagar. The NGO provides support to women, children, and the LGBT communities.



Snehalaya specifically focuses on these vulnerable members of society that have suffered at the hands of HIV and AIDS, trafficking, sexual violence and poverty.

Snehalaya has made great strides in raising awareness for these disadvantaged communities and continues to offer safe havens and escapes to women and children imprisoned in the cycle of poverty and abuse. Currently, the organization reaches more than 19,000 beneficiaries a year by offering services including: a) orphanages for children rescued from the sex trafficking industry; b) offices that offer emergency care for abandoned infants in addition to medical and psychological support for expectant mothers; c) 30 emergency safe houses for women and children experiencing domestic violence; d) 100 25-acre Himmatgram Biofarms that provide sustainable produce for Snehalaya projects; and e) a free telephone helpline for children and the public to help at-risk children that receives around 300 calls a day.

North East Network (NEN)

NEN is a women’s rights organization that was established in 1995 as part of the Beijing World Conference on Women. NEN operates mostly in North East India and focuses on women’s human rights and gender justice.



NEN organizes training sessions, awareness programs, retreats, as well as short film and art competitions all with the goal of merging advocacy with activism. The organization continues to fight against gender-based discrimination while building support for government policies that promote women’s rights and increase female representation in political, public and community settings.

Azad Foundation

The Azad Foundation is a professional feminist organization founded in 2008 that specifically works with resource-poor women living in urban areas in India. The Foundation provides opportunities for disadvantaged women to earn a livelihood as professional drivers and has trained hundreds of women since inception. The Foundation also trained and then employed the first ever female bus driver in Delhi. In total, the Azad Foundation has trained more

than 1,800 women in a range of topics to including self-defense, sexual and reproductive health, basic first aid as well as map reading.



The organization, which was founded in Delhi, has now expanded and has training centers in Jaipur and Kolkata. By offering training to women so that they can become professional drivers to earn a decent living, the Azad Foundation bolsters the economic status of underprivileged women while offering them the independence of self-reliance.

MAKAAM

Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch: MAKAAAM is a forum for female farmers’ rights that operates in 24 states in India. Even though women make up about 60 to 70 percent of the farming workforce in India, they only account for around 12 percent of landholdings. Since female farmers rarely own the land they work on, they are excluded from important support services provided by the government. However, MAKAAAM seeks to empower female farmers by teaching them to assert their rights, gain ownership of their livelihoods and the natural resources.

Raj Uphaar



Raj Uphaar is an initiative of Shrimad Rajchandra Love and Care, the charitable arm of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur. Raj Uphaar

supports over 250 underprivileged tribal women in their quest towards attaining self-reliance and a respectable source of income. It offers them end-to-end support by providing employment opportunities, skill training, raw material and equipment, safe workplaces, as well as product marketing and distribution.



These talented and dedicated women produce more than 100 desserts, snacks, fragrances and utility products. Raj Uphaar is the gift of sisterhood and empowerment for the tribal women of South Gujarat. It is a lab of innovation, it is a school of learning, it is a space of building confidence and conquering fears. venue for cultivating values and it is a second home for holistic development!

Shramik Naari Sangh (Sa-Ni-Sa)



SaNiSa is an initiative of Shrimad Rajchandra Atma tatva Research Center that undertakes economic empowerment of under-privileged and needy women to enable them earn a livelihood, run their families and become independent. Sa-Ni-Sa is a charitable society registered under The Societies Registration Act and The Bombay Public Trusts Act. Training and employment opportunities are provided in manufacturing of food products, tiffin services, corporate gift packs, premium chocolates, handcrafted bath & body care products and handicraft articles through its brands 'Chaakri', 'Divinite', 'Puro' and 'Udaan'.

Chaakri

Empowers women by training them to make Khakhras with 100% whole grains and natural ingredients. All Khakhras are vacuum packed, have zero trans-fat, are FSSAI approved and recommended by nutritionists.

Puro

Under-privileged women are trained to make Handcrafted Bath & Body Products that are without harmful, cancer-causing preservatives and chemicals. All Puro products are 100% vegetarian, non-toxic and FDA approved.

Divinite

Women are trained by professional chocolatiers in the art of premium chocolate making and packaging. Chocolates are handmade, FSSAI approved and have unique flavors like chilli, cinnamon, blueberry, etc.

These organizations fighting for women's empowerment in India are providing important support to all types of women in need all across the country. From female farmers to entrepreneurs and members of vulnerable communities these organizations are elevating an important part of Indian society that is often overlooked or disadvantaged.

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How Purpose Changes Across Your Lifetime

By Kira M. Newman (July 14, 2020)



Kira M. Newman is the managing editor of Greater Good. Her work has been published in outlets including the Washington Post, Mindful magazine, Social Media Monthly, and Tech.co, and she is the co-editor of The Gratitude Project.

Purpose is not a destination, suggests research, but a journey and a practice.



Purpose is the stuff of inspirational posters and motivational speeches. When we find our purpose, they say, we'll know what we are meant to do in life. The path will be laid out before us, and our job will be to keep following that vision with unwavering commitment. But is this really what purpose looks like?

Alongside the self-help hype is a body of research on purpose across the lifespan, reaching back more than 30 years. Following people as they grapple with their identity as teens, settle into the responsibilities of adulthood, and make the shift to retirement, this research paints a more complicated picture of purpose—but a hopeful one, too.

Here's the upshot: We don't have to worry about finding our one true purpose; we can find purpose in different areas of life. In fact, purpose isn't something we find at all. It's something we can cultivate through deliberate action and reflection, and it will naturally wax and wane throughout our lives. Like happiness, purpose is not a destination, but a journey and a practice. That means it's accessible at any age, if we're willing to explore what matters to us and what kind of person we want to be—and act to become that person.

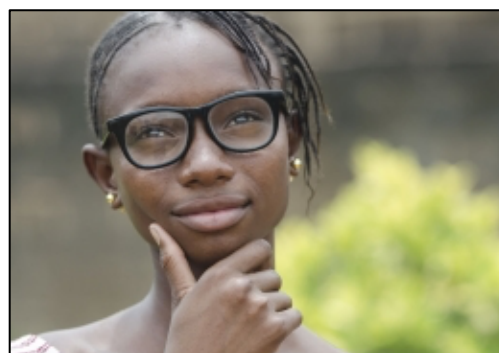
This "is a project that endures across the lifespan," as purpose expert Kendall Bronk and her colleagues write in a 2009 paper. If we're able to

revisit and renew our sense of purpose as we navigate milestones and transitions, suggests this research, then we can look forward to more satisfying, meaningful lives.

Teens: Seeking purpose

A purpose in life is not just any big goal that we pursue. According to researchers, purpose is a long-term aim that is meaningful to the self—but goes beyond the self, aiming to make a difference to the broader world. We might find purpose in fighting poverty, creating art, or making people's lives better through technology.

That process begins when we're teens, as we explore who we are, what we value, and what we want out of life, says Bronk, an associate professor at Claremont Graduate University. As they try different interests and activities, like music or volunteering, some teens start to discover paths they want to pursue. Other teens have challenging life experiences, like a parent being diagnosed with cancer or a shooting in their hometown, that spur them to work on particular causes. Others are inspired by role models who are leading purposeful lives, from parents to coaches.



Talk with Teens about Purpose

Help adolescents start exploring and reflecting on meaningful life goals

Try It Now

(https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/talk_with_teens_about_purpose)

Mariah Jordan from Cleveland, one of the winners of the GGSC Purpose Challenge Scholarship Contest, often accompanied her grandmother to doctor's appointments as a child. Over time, witnessing her grandmother's experiences, she began to see the racial inequalities that existed in health care. She went on to volunteer in a medical setting and conduct research on cancer in African Americans, working to eliminate health disparities and bring more cultural sensitivity to the field of medicine.

William Damon, author of *The Path to Purpose* and a professor at Stanford, has spent nearly 20 years studying how people develop purpose in work, family, and civic life. As he describes it, purpose is something of a chemical reaction that takes place when our skills meet the needs of the world. Young people must identify something in their environment that could be improved, whether it's politics or modern jazz music, and recognize something in themselves that they can bring to bear on that problem—leadership skills, say, or creativity.

At this age, though, only about 20 percent of teens have a strong sense of purpose in life, at least according to Damon's work. Others have pie-in-the-sky dreams, or fun hobbies, or they're just trying to get through high school. More often, childhood and adolescence seem to be the time when the building blocks of purpose are established, but we're still exploring what we want out of life.

Adults: Busy with purpose

According to Damon, most people who find purpose do so in their 20s and 30s. This is when we tend to start building a career and a family—both of which are major sources of purpose during adulthood, along with religion and volunteering.

In the family realm, we may find a deep sense of purpose from raising children, as well as taking care of aging parents. At work, we might feel fulfilled in supporting our coworkers, making a difference in the organization or contributing to society, Damon writes.

When education professional Paul LeBuffe found out that he was raising a special-needs child, it was a turning point for his family and his career—and his sense of purpose. Since then, he has been working to promote resilience in children and adults, and within his own family. Working in that field means he's always learning things he can apply to his own life, which helps give him a sense of balance. While finding purpose can feel like an exciting adventure for young people, who might take gap years or try

interesting electives in college, purpose becomes more urgent for adults.



How Strong is Your Sense of Purpose?

Do you have a long-term goal that's meaningful to yourself and the world? Take our quiz to find out. (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/purpose_in_life)

"In our culture we expect young people to explore what matters most to them, but by midlife, we expect them to have sorted this out," write Bronk and her colleagues.

At some age, lacking in purpose becomes unpleasant—but Bronk points out that having purpose isn't always a picnic, either. Going after a big, long-term goal can be stressful and discouraging; as anyone who has raised a child knows, things that bring us meaning don't always bring us day-to-day fun and good cheer.

While there may be struggles, though, people who have that sense of direction and purpose do ultimately tend to have more satisfying, healthier, and even longer lives.

Midlife and beyond: A crossroads of purpose

While purpose tends to be highest in adulthood, old age can come with a diminishing sense of purpose and direction. In one survey of people ages 50-92, only 30 percent reported feeling purposeful.

The causes aren't too surprising. Two of the biggest sources of purpose for adults, work and family, take a major hit when we retire and when kids leave home. Suddenly, we wake up to days that aren't structured by meetings and deadlines, by soccer games and homework help. It can feel like the things that defined us—our very identity—are slipping away. On top of all that, nagging health problems can make it physically harder to stay involved with activities and people that might keep us feeling engaged.

Gerontologist and AgeWave founder Ken Dychtwald sees a pattern where society doesn't recognize the value and wisdom of older people, writing them off as feeble or irrelevant, and elders don't always put in the work to learn new technology and connect with younger people. While society might be telling them to relax and enjoy their golden years, he says, many older adults just feel adrift.

Not everyone has this experience, of course. People who have strong relationships and a positive attitude toward aging tend to fare better. In one study, researchers interviewed people ages 61-70 and identified the ones who were able to maintain or increase their sense of purpose over the decade. Those individuals often turned their efforts inward to become better human beings, learning new skills or tackling long-held emotional struggles. As Damon explains, the pause of retirement and an empty nest can be an invitation to introspection, in ways that weren't possible in our chaotic midlives, and a reconnection with the things that truly matter.

John Leland, a *New York Times* reporter, observes that the elders who held on to a sense of purpose thrived because of their flexibility. They rolled with the punches as their lives changed and evolved, and they remained open to new experiences. "Those who are able to understand their roles as constantly changing, constantly evolving—it's a story that they're still writing—are able to deal with the ups and downs that we all confront better than people who see themselves as fixed in one point," he says.

In many ways, the pursuit of purpose as an older adult looks a lot like it does for teens. Marc Freedman, founder of the generation-connecting organization Encore.org, sees this parallel, too: Instead of internships, Encore.org offers fellowships where older people spend up to a year working in nonprofits, foundations, and other social sector organizations. The experience is designed to help them find an "encore career," a purposeful activity that serves the greater good and contributes to the world they'll leave behind.

Gary Maxworthy, who won Encore.org's Purpose Prize in 2007, was 56 when his wife died from cancer. After more than three decades in food distribution, he wanted to give back. He started volunteering at a food bank, where he quickly noticed a big problem and a big opportunity: Growers were having to send lots of "imperfect" produce to landfills, because they couldn't sell it, and accepting fresh produce was too difficult for food banks. He created Farm to Family to solve that problem and ensure that fresh fruit and vegetables make it to families in need.

Other Encore.org fellows include retired doctors caring for underserved patients and retired tech company executives helping to improve online government services. Meanwhile, organizations like Stanford's Advanced Leadership Institute and the Modern Elder Academy offer college-like experiences for older adults looking for a fresh start.

In Freedman's experience, very few of us will wake up one day with a totally new purpose in life. Instead, he observes people draw on the skills, knowledge, and values they've cultivated over a lifetime to start a new chapter.

That's good news, because it means the building blocks of purpose are already within us when we reach maturity.

The practice of purpose

Years ago, Bronk interviewed young people about their sense of purpose, hoping to gain some insight into how it developed. Afterward, she was surprised to hear how much the participants enjoyed the conversation. In fact, she and her team discovered that talking with young people about the things that mattered to them actually increased their sense of purpose in life—an outcome the researchers hadn't even been looking for. That's partly why Bronk believes, deep down, that everyone has a purpose, even if they don't realize it or know what it is yet.

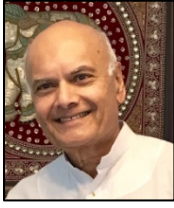
"We all have things that we care about, we all have special talents that we can apply to make a meaningful difference in the world around us," she says. Other researchers agree that you can *have* a sense of purpose even if you can't write it down in a simple sentence: "My purpose is..."

As we've seen, we can have multiple purposes that rise and fall in importance over our lifetime, as schedules are juggled and priorities shift. When we face transitions, whether it's changing careers, going through divorce or illness, or hitting a milestone birthday, we may be prompted to slow down, reflect, and reprioritize. In other words, purpose is a constant practice—which is something Leland took away from his time with New York's "oldest old."

"They believed that purpose was something you created, not something you sought, and it would be something that you have to keep creating," reflects Leland. "I think they would say that happiness would be the same thing. It's something that you have within you, and you have to tap it and recognize it and cultivate it rather than waiting for it to come your way."

Introspection

By Ramesh K Khandhar



Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of executive board and past head teacher of pathshala at Jain Center of Southern California. He travels around to deliver spiritual discourses and continues to do intense introspection and contemplation. In addition, his special interest is reading and contemplating Jain scriptures, listening to spiritual discourses, enjoying solitude, and writing spiritual articles in 'Divya Dhvani' and in Jain Digest magazines. Currently he is serving as Section Editor and Advisor of Jain Digest.

What is Introspection?

In all walks of life, many solutions and insights rely on introspection. All eastern ancient traditions, philosophers and omniscient have described introspection as a path to wisdom, truth, and the process of knowing thyself. It is the process of conscious self-awareness. The word itself translates from the Latin *introspicere*, meaning "to look within." It happens when we look inward and examine our behavior, emotions, thoughts, and motives with a purpose of critical assessment of our actions and behavior. It is a process to stop and assess our life situation. We zoom in to the problem if any and find the root cause and orient our actions to move forward in life's journey. We learn about our own currently ongoing, or very recently past, mental states or processes. The objective is to look back and reflect on behaviors and processes to create a deeper understanding in the present.



How does Introspection impact our life?

We can scrutinize our deep feelings by exploring ourselves which helps us to connect dots that were not connected previously. Introspection helps us to find solutions to our problems and helps us in making critical decisions. Simply sitting down and thinking will bring us insight into what makes us happy and what brings us fulfillment and purpose. Otherwise, we may

never realize what our values, dreams, and passions truly are.

It helps achieve the fullness of our truest essence. We become aware of our wants, desires, shortcomings, and how they impact our life, our state of mind, and obstruct our spiritual progress. Our personality, performance and spiritual progress are enhanced through self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-knowledge. We understand our inner psychology and help us further to understand the soul.

In this article we will discuss the role of introspection to make social and material life more meaningful and satisfying.

What prevents us from doing Introspection/Self-reflection?

It is necessary to focus attention on the external to make social and material life more meaningful and satisfying. We live, desire, and struggle to achieve, without knowing what we truly want and without knowing ourselves. As a result, we have externalized meaning, and hence every aspect of our lives. We're trapped in a culture of doing, and where pause is literally a waste of time. The fast-paced life has made it difficult to sit back and reflect on what we are doing or how we are feeling. The drive for achievement, productivity, and peak performance has their place, but they quickly become signs of neurosis.

Many times, we have not set the right priorities and waste our time watching TV, YouTube or play video games. Both busyness and mind-numbing activities are ways to avoid self-reflection. It runs against the grain of a busy culture. It requires us to set specific time aside to be quiet, still, and alone so that we can do self-reflection to get more insight into our desires and feelings.

Why Is Introspection important for everyone?

The research shows that we have more than 60,000 thoughts floating in our monkey mind on every given day. Out of this more than 90% thoughts are repetitive and are attributed to be consuming our mind-space with useless stuff. 50% of our thought content turns out to be negative in nature, which has no real base as such, but consumes our mind energies in the wrong direction thereby hampering our ability to think with clarity and conviction.



(Image by geralt at pixabay.com)

So, if we truly want to grow with time, we need to get rid of these unwanted thoughts which we have borrowed externally. It is only possible if we take some time out for introspection and question our day to day living methodology. Our education system and society offer us methods of critical evaluation of things outside of us. Hence, we readily judge and analyze people and environments around us without analyzing and reflecting on our own inner thought process and behavior.

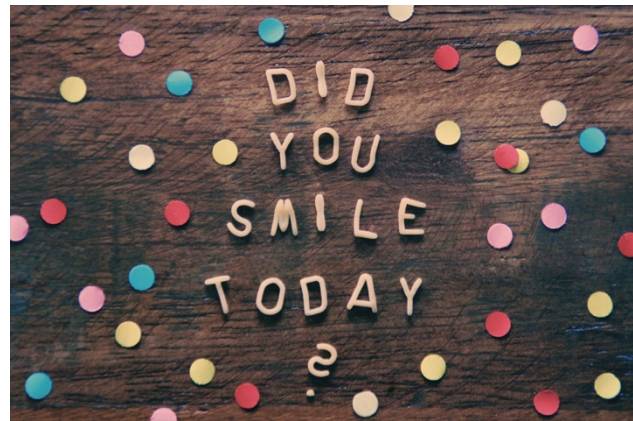
Widespread consumerism has made us more open to external, readily consumable forms of content (visual and aural) instead of being introspective of the content we have been harboring and/or creating within us. As a result, we become locked in a vicious cycle where we remain cynical, critical, and judgmental about what others have to say instead of listening to our inner voice and doing what we want to do which will make us grow.

What should be the course of action?

Introspection is a universally accepted sure way to increase our self-knowledge, to look inward, to

introspect deeply into our emotions, experiences, and to understand why we are the way we are? When we reflect, we might be trying to understand our feelings. Instead of jumping to easy solutions, make time to sit down and think. Schedule at least 15 minutes for reflection into our daily or at least weekly routine. Consider making time for reflection as our first activity of the day. If we are striving for wisdom, introspection and self-reflection is key. Both go hand in hand as self-reflection is an introspective process and can lead to positive change.

It helps us to take control of our life, happiness, and success, and we understand how we “tick.” Are there certain situations at work that leave us feeling stressed while others aren’t? Do we have difficulty talking about certain topics with family members? Why is that? “What made me so upset after that meeting?”, “Do I really believe what I think I believe?”, “What career would make me truly happy?”, “Why do I beat myself up so much for minor mistakes?”. True aspirants should ask some more questions: Am I using my time wisely? Am I taking anything for granted? Am I thinking negative thoughts before I fall asleep? Am I living true to myself? Am I achieving the goals that I’ve set for myself? These questions will lead to some introspection about our activities and the underlying thoughts and beliefs.



(Image by Kranich17 at pixabay.com)

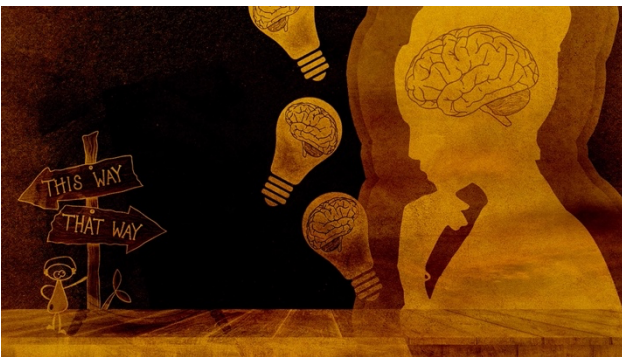
The biggest benefit of this is that, so often in life, we become caught up in reactivity, emotion, or distraction. It’s only upon careful reflection do we uncover deeper truths. When setting aside time to reflect, we view the past situations from a more balanced and grounded perspective. When we hold a mirror to our thoughts, we visualize more

1) **It increases our self-awareness.** Most people think they know themselves having spent so much time with themselves. In reality, we often know ourselves as a person we aspire to be and not the person we are in the present. Self-reflection makes us understand ourselves at a deeper level. It is critical to success in all areas of life. It leads to self-improvement and increases our confidence and level of self-esteem.

2) **It enhances our perspective** to understand and see things from a different point of view. When we take a step back from a situation, we gain a new understanding. We can see the whole picture, not just the piece of the puzzle. We become more open minded.

3) **It allows us to respond, and not react.** When we react, we are not thinking about the potential ramifications of our actions. However, when we spend time reflecting on a situation, we can respond more thoughtfully and change our behavior for next time.

4) **It facilitates a deeper level of learning and understanding.** It's a critical part of the education process. When we reflect, digest, and integrate, we will be able to make abstract connections, as well as retain and recall information. We gain a better understanding of what's working and what's not. This in turn, allows us to make better decisions, change our actions and build our confidence with increased knowledge and perspective.



(Image by chenspec at pixabay.com)

It allows us to challenge our beliefs and assumptions. We sit back and debate the validity of that belief. It allows us to detach ourselves from the things we have

no control over, and instead focus on the things that we can influence and what really matters to us.

5) **We become better listeners.** Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. Instead of evaluating and judging what the other person is saying, connect with them, and listen and observe what they have to say. As we become a better listener to those around us, we will learn to listen to our inner voice better as well.



(Image by USA-Reiseblogger at pixabay.com)

In conclusion, our goal is not perfection but to strive for improvement. We will continue to make mistakes, learn from them, forgive ourselves and move on. We should make introspection as part of our daily life, if possible. The benefits are just numerous; namely, improving our perception, becoming more responsive, a deeper level of learning and understanding, increasing our self-awareness, and making us better listeners.



(Image by gerald at pixabay.com)

In the next article to be published in the June 2022 issue we will cover Introspection and the Spiritual Path.

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Diving in Divine Love

By Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai



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

The emotion of love is common, but the experience of love is not the same. Pujya Gurudevshri explains that love, when directed towards the Divine alone can bring the experience of true happiness

An aspirant does not stop at mere wishful thinking. He follows practices such as meditation, austerities, etc., and puts in a great deal of effort so they may bear fruits. Yet, he remains incompetent in removing his ego, his doership. 'I have done this' or 'I am doing this', such ego remains intact, and due to this, he is unable to attain the divine state of fulfilment.

In spite of doing everything, when he recognizes that the ego hasn't annihilated, he becomes weary. This gives birth to a devotee in him. A devotee is one who knows that nothing is possible by his doing. He feels insignificant and so he surrenders fully to God. In doing so, he drops his ego, his doership. Devotion, therefore, is not just a physical or verbal activity but it is a process of annihilating the doership. When devotion manifests, all barriers to divine communion begin to break. When the ego vanishes, God is realized.

One may think that as long as there is activity, there is a doer. So, to remove the doer, one must stop all activities. But as long as there are mind, speech, and body, how can there be no activity? The solution is - stay surrendered, stay non-doer. God is like an ocean sending clarion calls to get dissolved in Him. The inquisitive one remains seated at its shores, the aspirant swims over its waters, while the devotee dives into it like the pearl diver. The inquisitive one and the aspirant, both are in pursuit of God, but the devotee dissolves in God.

What is Devotion?

The impure form of love is lust, and the pure form is devotion. Mistaking lust as love, man has been running away from love. Undoubtedly, impure love is a sin. But pure love is a means to liberation. When love becomes pure, guileless, selfless, profound, and without any worldly motive, it is called devotion.

To understand devotion, you must at least know what love is. He who has not loved in life, has never been in even worldly love, cannot understand the divine

love either. Won't you need some experience in that direction? How else will you purify love?

Redirect Your Love Towards God

Whatever love energy has manifested in you, pure or impure, direct it at the Lotus Feet of God. Love when directed towards the dispassionate One cannot remain impure; it soon sheds off its impurities. It becomes pure and gets transformed into devotion. In fact, in loving God, love increases in quality and quantity and eventually this devotion transforms into supreme devotion, oneness with the divine.

Therefore, to get immersed in devotion, pour your energy of love into following the instructions of the Enlightened One. In the beginning, you may not experience joy. You may even experience disinterestedness. But by doing this, your connection in the worldly direction will start growing weaker. Gradually, your beliefs, inclinations, activities, and life will get transformed and soon you will revel in an unprecedented state of divinity.

Practice to Perfection

Once a girl invited to her wedding, a teacher she had great regard for. The teacher brought a sitar as her wedding gift. The girl wondered why the teacher had gifted the sitar, knowing very well that she couldn't play it. She told the teacher, "Because it has been gifted by you, I will surely look after it well."

The teacher said, "To look after it well, you must play it regularly. No one is born knowledgeable, but with practice, everything is possible."

After a decade, the teacher and the pupil met again. The girl fell at his feet and said, "Your gift changed my life. To look after it, I began to play the sitar. To play regularly, I needed time and purpose. So, it saved me from wasting time in fulfilling passions. And with the purpose of playing, it for the divine, my desires for the sensual pleasures started reducing. The reduction in

sense indulgence and passions increased my love for the divine and has brought joy and peace in my life.”

Such a small looking resolve and a little bit of practice resulted in such huge benefit! In this way, constantly directing love towards the divine makes the love pure and transforms it into devotion.

Begin with beholding God, listen to His teachings, reflect upon His virtues, remember Him, and praise Him, you will experience purity of heart. By constant practice of diverting your love towards God, devotion will increase and reach its absolute state. But if you are weak in this endeavor, your love will not become pure and complete; instead, passions will sully it.

Devotion is divine madness

As feelings of love, faith, and surrender increase, offering of heart, head and desire occurs. A kind of madness arises. Madness is of two types. One, when one falls from the intellectual level, and the other, when one transcends the intellect. In both cases, that of the insane and the divine lover, the intellect gets dropped. The divine lover transcends the intellect, and so from that standpoint, he is called mad.

In this madness, a devotee becomes child-like, pure and innocent. Worldliness does not enter him. Neither wealth deludes him, nor does he seek worldly status or sensual pleasures, or become slave to passions. However, the difference between a child and a devotee is that the child is innocent because he is ignorant while a devotee is aware and awakened. The intellectual capacity of a child is not yet developed while that of a devotee is developed and surrendered.

Because of this, his conduct changes and the worldly people do not approve of it. They do not like or understand it, and at times, they even criticize him. When he does not act according to their beliefs, understanding, desire, or definition, the society opposes him. Not just society, even the family may oppose him. But the devotee is not perturbed or angered. Instead, he comes out of these events, purer, like gold.

The intoxication of love

There are two types of ecstasies in love. A novice drinker gets drunk even with a few sips of liquor. From his conduct, anyone can make out that he is intoxicated. But a seasoned drinker may have had a lot, yet he doesn't sway, and continues doing his work normally. No one can make out that he is drunk and still he is intoxicated. In the same way, when love first manifests in a person, his devotion is like the novice

drinker. But as his love becomes uninterrupted, the ecstasy remains unbroken. He remains immersed in devotion in every state. He performs all activities intoxicated in love, in divine ecstasy. Others remain oblivious of his inner state.

When you are in love with someone, your life is filled with joy, there is sparkle in the eyes, your feet begin to dance. Your heart blossoms and sways in joy like a bud blossoming in the presence of the sun. You begin to fly high as though you have wings. Even an ordinary love makes your life happy and filled with joyous melody as if you have found the purpose of life. Why then would love for the divine not bring a unique state of being? The one in love with God experiences divinity in him and its elevation is of the highest kind. He starts becoming free of desires, negative tendencies, flaws, and impurities.

It is love and not the scriptures that bring the first news of the divine. You are informed of the divine not by the ringing of temple bells, but when the heart is soaked in love for the divine. A devotee is not satisfied with mere words or knowledge of principles. He yearns for experience; an intimate, personal, direct experience of the divine. This can be had only when the supreme love for the divine manifests. A devotee then experiences divine intoxication, and complete contentment. Such an experience of the divine state manifests as a result of love, faith and surrender of individuality. Wondrous is the state of such a devotee.

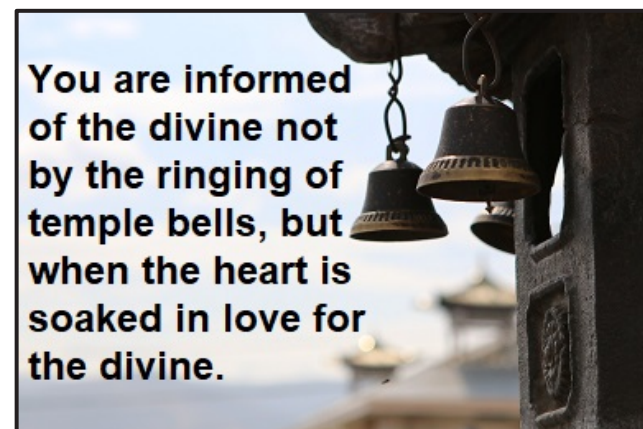
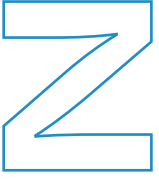


Image by [KiraHundeDog](#) from [Pixabay](#)

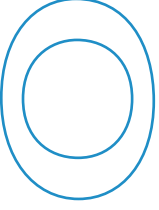
DEVOTION



आत्मीय संत की दस आज्ञाएं

By Reena Shah

एक अत्यंत आत्मीय, उदार, प्रसन्नचित्त, प्रेम अवतार परम पुरुष को चिरकाल के लिए वंदन !

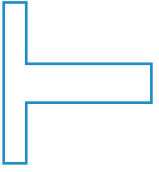


गुरु और शिष्य का संबंध जैसे दीया और बाती, फूल और खुशबू या फिर जैसे चेतन और शरीर का संबंध होता है उस तरह का है। बिना बाती के दिया तुच्छ है, बिना खुशबू के फूल वस्त्रहीन है, और बिना चेतन के शरीर मृत है। दूसरे शब्दों में इस परम पुरुष के बिना शिष्य का कोई अस्तित्व नहीं है। वास्तव में पुराण पुरुष और इस आधुनिक परम पुरुष में भी कोई भेद नहीं है बल्कि भगवान से भी ज्यादा परम पुरुष यानी सद्गुरु विशेष है; क्योंकि भगवान भी सद्गुरु के आधीन ही रहे हैं। बिना सत्पुरुष की पहचान के भगवान का स्वरूप नहीं समझा जा सकता। सद्गुरु का उपदेश और शिष्य की योग्यता बिना सच्चे देव और धर्म की पहचान असंभव है।

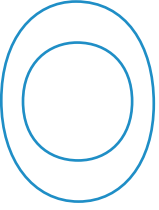


कबीर दास जी ने कहा है कि:

**कुमति कीच चेला भरा, गुरु ज्ञान जल होय।
जनम – जनम का मोरचा, पल में डारे धोया ॥**



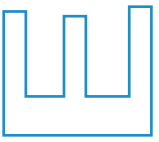
अर्थ: कुबुद्धि रूपी कीचड़ से शिष्य भरा है, उसे धोने के लिए गुरु का ज्ञान जल है। जन्म – जन्मान्तरो की बुराई गुरुदेव क्षण ही में नष्ट कर देते हैं।



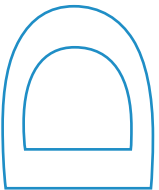
यह बुराई गुरुदेव किस तरह दूर करते हैं? गुरु आज्ञा से! आज्ञा का मतलब आदेश, कमांड, ऐसा करो या ऐसा मत करो मतलब do's and dont's. अगर हमारे पेट में कभी दुखता है तो हम अपनी दवाई खुद कर लेते हैं Tums या Tylenol खाकर गुजारा कर लेते हैं फिर जब पेट का दर्द ठीक नहीं होता तो हम डॉक्टर के पास जाकर इलाज करवाते हैं और यह डॉक्टर हमें दवाई के साथ-साथ do's and dont's भी लिख देता है कि हम क्या खा सकते हैं और क्या नहीं खा सकते। इसी तरह मोक्ष मार्ग जाना हो तो सतगुरु के पास जाना चाहिए और वही करना चाहिए जो वह कहें मेरे भव रोग को मिटाने की दवा तो सद्गुरु ही निश्चित करेंगे। गुरु वह जो हमें अज्ञान रूपी अंधकार में से निकालकर प्रकाश की तरफ ले जाए, गुरु वह जो मोक्ष का मार्ग बताएं, गुरु वह जो मेरे दोष पकड़े, गुरु वह जो गर्दन पकड़ कर भी उस दोष को निकाल दे।



गुरु का शिष्य पर परस्पर प्रभाव एक ऐसी गहराई को छूता है जिसमें दो मुख्य चीजें काम करती हैं: शिष्य का समर्पण और गुरु के साथ आत्मीयता और घनिष्ठता। सच्चा शिक्षण तो तभी होता है जब शिष्य की योग्यता बढ़ती है और दोनों के बीच एक wavelength की tuning हो जाती है। शिष्य का संपूर्ण परिवर्तन गुरु के द्वारा इस सम्बन्ध की गहराई को संकेत करता है। गुरु के साथ इस तरह का सम्बन्ध अनेक तरीकों से समझ सकते हैं परन्तु इस सम्बन्ध को विशेष रूप से समझने के लिए शिष्य की गुरु के प्रति अपूर्व भक्ति होनी आवश्यक है। यह भक्ति गुरुवाणी को सुनकर और समझकर प्रगट होती है। गुरु की वाणी तो ऐसी अद्भुत होती है की उसको सुने बिना तो विचार भी नहीं आते।



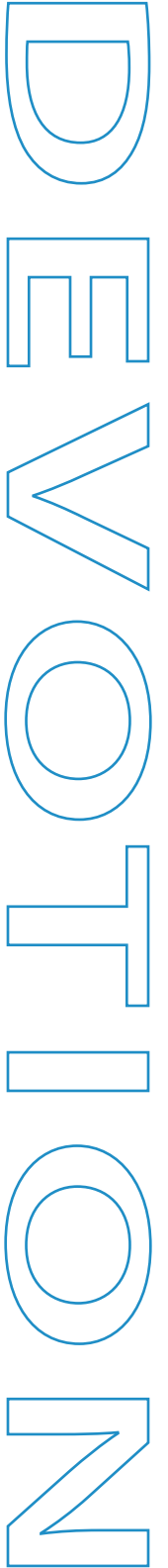
**आज्ञा की आराधना ही धर्म
और आज्ञा की आराधना ही तप
- आचारांग सूत्र**



इस निबंध में ऐसे ही माहात्म्य वाले ज्ञानी की 10 आज्ञाएं (commandments) हैं जिनसे व्यावहारिक और आत्मिक विकास संभवित है। इस जीवन का अर्थ इन 10 आज्ञायों से ही कुछ कुछ समझ आया है। जिस प्रकार Christianity या Judaism में 10 commandments को सिर्फ जाना या समझना काफी नहीं होता पर उन commandments को जीवन में उतारना भी ज़रूरी है उस ही तरह गुरु की 10 आज्ञाएं भी जीवन में उतार कर भव रोग मिटाने के लिए आवश्यक हैं। कुछ आज्ञाएं



स्व और सद्गुरु के बीच के सम्बन्ध को सम्बोधित करती है और कुछ आज्ञाएं पर और स्व के सम्बन्ध को सम्बोधित करती हैं। यह आज्ञाएं मनुष्य जीवन को सफल बनाने के लिए हैं और reminder की तरह काम करती हैं।



1) योग्यता/पात्रता बढ़नी चाहिए

शिष्य की सुपात्रता या योग्यता तो गुरु शिष्य के अनूठे और अपूर्व सम्बन्ध की नींव (foundation) हैं। ज्ञानी मोक्ष के मार्ग की secret तब तक नहीं कहेंगे शिष्य को जब तक उसकी योग्यता नहीं होगी। हम भव भव से जो परिमभ्रमण कर रहे हैं उसमें अनेको बार साधु बने हैं, ज्ञानी से मिले हैं; पर हम पर ज्ञानी का कोई रंग ही नहीं चढ़ा। इसका मतलब आज तक जो बात समझनी चाहिए थी वह नहीं समझे; क्योंकि योग्यता नहीं है। जिनसे मार्गदर्शन ले रहे हैं उन सद्गुरु के प्रति अटूट श्रद्धा, प्रतीति, विश्वास चाहिए। जिनसे मार्गदर्शन ले रहे हैं वह आत्मा दिला सकते हैं, और यह पुरुष सच्चा है ऐसा प्रूफ मिलने पर अटूट श्रद्धा होगी। जो गलत लगता होगा पहले वह विचार करने पर सच लगने लगेगा। तब कह सकेंगे की योग्यता प्रगट हुई है! पूज्यश्री पापाजीने कहा था की योग्यता तो तभी प्रगटेगी जब शिष्य में अनहद अथवा अटूट श्रद्धा प्रगट होगी और वह ज्ञानी के वचन पर चिंतन मनन करने लगेगी। और एक बार यह अटूट श्रद्धा आयेगी तो शिष्य में सत और असत समझने की योग्यता आयेगी और विवेक प्रगटेगा। ग्यानी संसार की बात भी करेंगे तो योग्य जीव संसार में से परमार्थ निकालने की क्षमता का बीज बो चूका होगा। योग्य जीव और शिष्य की भक्ति उनके गुरु के प्रति उनके माँ बाप की भक्ति से कहीं अधिक होगी। शिष्य जो आज्ञा पाले तो आत्मा सम्राट बनेगा। गुरु भक्ति और गुरु सेवा अनिवार्य है आत्म ज्ञान के लिए।

2) सद्गुरु के प्रति भक्ति बढ़ाओ

सद्गुरु नाम के तत्त्व की भक्ति करनी है। सद्गुरु के सानिध्य और शरण में जाने से वह हमें भक्ति के 4 पाए सिखाते हैं: गुरु के साथ प्रेम सगाई, परम श्रद्धा, परम स्मरण, और परम समर्पण। इस प्रेम यात्रा में अपना सर्वस्व अर्पण करके, गुरु के चरण में सभी इच्छाओं को मन को और हृदय को समर्पित कर देना है। भक्त रत्न अम्बालाल भाई निष्काम भक्ती और सेवा की साक्षात् प्रतिमा थे। उनका समर्पण ऐसा था की उन्होंने अपनी इच्छा को भी कृपालुदेव को समर्पित कर दिया था। इस यात्रा में श्री गुरु पग पग पर अपने साथ होते हैं। सद्गुरु का यह commandment पूरा करने में वही ध्येय निर्धारित करवाते हैं, वही उत्साहित करते हैं, “बस आ गया है धाम” ऐसा कह कर हँसते हँसते मंज़िल तक पहुंचा देते हैं।

**संगत संतन की कर ले, जनम का सार्थक कछु कर ले
उत्तम देहि नर पाया प्राणी, इसका हित कछु कर ले
सद्गुरु शरण में जाके बाबा, जनम मरण दूर कर ले
- कबीरदास**

आज से 7 साल पहले मेरी श्रद्धा और भक्ति पूज्यश्री के प्रति कम थी। तो उन्होंने मुझे कहा की धीरे धीरे बढ़ेगी और मुझे भक्ति मार्ग का रहस्य और निर्वाण मार्ग का रहस्य पढ़ने को कहा। वह पुस्तक पढ़ने से मुझे उन किताबों का अर्थ कुछ अलग ही समझ में आया, भक्ति का अर्थ समझा, भक्ति किसकी करनी वह समझ में आया, भक्ति क्या है उसका पता चला, और भक्ति से क्या हासिल होगा वह समझ में आया। उस पुस्तक को पढ़ते पढ़ते मेरे अंदर के भाव एकदम बदले और मेरे सत्संग लीडर प्रेमळ के साथ चर्चा करने से लगा की मुझे तो प्रेम और श्रद्धा का अर्थ ही नहीं पता था। मेरे लिए इस अनुभव ने मेरी ज़िन्दगी बदल दी। मेरी पूज्यश्री के प्रति श्रद्धा बढ़ी और भक्ति के भाव जागे।

3) वांचन के साथ विचार

अंतरंग जागृति की मुसाफरी की शुरुआत ज्ञानी के वचन/प्रवचन सुनने या पुस्तक पढ़ने से होती है। कृपालुदेव ने समझाया भी है की किस तरह श्रवण/वांचन करने से मनन और निदिध्यासन आत्म ज्ञान की तरफ ले जाता है। यह ३ स्टेप का process आत्म के विकास के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। वांचन करने की भी रीति कई स्टेप्स में देखी जा सकती है। विशालबुद्धि से पढ़ना (with an openmind). जब हम पढ़ते हैं तब अपने स्ट्रांग views त्याग कर, दोष दृष्टि पर नियंत्रण लाकर, खुद की

Z

मान्यताओं को छोड़कर, सरलपने से निष्कपटता से पढ़ना चाहिए. इसके बाद मुख्या points लिख कर विचारणा चाहिए की ज्ञानी के कहने का मर्म क्या है. इसके बाद tally करना चाहिए की हमने जो समझा है वह सही है न? अपने सत्संग लीडर से चर्चा करके या गुरु वाणी या गुरु शास्त्र पढ़कर, इसके पश्चात जो पढ़ा है उसका सारे दिन विचार या आलोड़न (churning) चलनी चाहिए.

O

**मात्र ज्ञानी के आश्रय तथा आशीर्वाद से सब सुधर नहीं जाता;
परन्तु उनके दिए हुए वचन के इरादे (आशय) पर पुरुषार्थ करने से दशा प्राप्त होती है
- पूज्य पप्पाजी**

I

जब से पूज्यश्री की आज्ञा अनुसार पदार्थ विज्ञानं पढ़ना शुरू किया तब से अर्थपूर्ण तरीके से पढ़ना या वांचन करना समझ आया. तीन बार पढ़ने की आज्ञा में ऐसा लगा जैसे हर बार कोई नया ही गूढ़ रहस्य सामने आता था. मेरे भक्ति के Captain के प्रति अहो भाव जागे और श्रद्धा बढी. पूज्यश्री की आज्ञा "सुबह 2 घंटे का वांचन और उस पर पूरे दिन विचार" में गूढ़ रहस्य छुपा है आत्मिक विकास के लिए. सत और असत का विवेक ही नहीं था. अपना अस्तित्व इस लोकाकाश में क्या है वह समझने की शुरुआत हुई. स्व को जानने की शुरुआत हुई इस प्रभावशाली वांचन से.

F

4) सत्संग करना चाहिए

सत्संग तो स्व के परिचय की आग में कूदने का आमंत्रण है. यह ऐसी आग है जो हमें नहीं जलायेगी, पर वह जलायेगी जो हम नहीं हैं. सत्संग (आत्म का संग) का मतलब है सरकना. सत्संग ज़्यादातर सद्गुरु की company में होता है इसीलिए सत्संग का अर्थ है किसी सत आत्मा, शुद्ध आत्मा का संगत करना. मेरी भाव दशा सरकनी चाहिए. गुरु के मन को भी समझने की क्षमता उत्पन्न करता है सत्संग. सत्संग वह जो सत (आत्मा) का परिचय कराये, जहां आत्मा का विचार आये, और सद्गुरु पर जो आश्रित हैं उनका संग मिले.

O

V

E

D

**सत्संग नो रस चाख,
प्राणी, तू तो सत्संग नो रस चाख |
प्रथम लागे तीखो ने कडवो,
पछी आंबा केरी शाख |
- मीराबाई**

सत्संग करने से उसका माहात्म्य समझ आया. पूज्यश्री कौन हैं, उनकी आज्ञा का महत्व क्या है. यह सभी का मर्म समझ में आया. बहुत बार सत्संग प्राप्त होने के बाद भी कुछ समझ नहीं आता क्योंकि पात्रता नहीं होती. सत्संग में आने के बाद आत्मा के विषय में जानने को मिला. इस अरूपी चीज़ जो दिखती नहीं है उसके लिए प्यास जागी. आज आँख में आँसू आ जाते हैं परमात्मा के लिए या उनके सामने; सत्संग के कारण! क्योंकि इस सत्संग ने अंदर के कई तार हिला दिए हैं. "जोग नथी सत्संग नो नथी सत्सेवा जोग..." का अर्थ समझ आया. जब कोई जीव मधुशाला से बाहर निकलता है तो वह संसार का सुख दुःख सब भूल जाता है शराब के असर के कारण. बस इस ही तरह जब जीव सत्संग से बाहर आये तो ऐसा आनंद और खुशी मिलनी चाहिए और जब कोई सत्संग में जाए तो सुब सुख दुःख बाहर छोड़ कर घुसना चाहिए सत के संग में. Immersion is the key. और जब तक हम वह नहीं करेंगे, वह लाभदायक नहीं होगा. इसके लिए भी योग्यता चाहिए.

(To be continued in the June 2022 issue of Jain Digest)



An Exemplary Life of Pujya Panyas Dr. Arunvijayji Maharaj

Compiled humbly on behalf of all the Disciples of Arunvijayji Maharaj, by Dr. Vijay Shah



Dr. Vijay Shah is a Sadhak (student) taking small steps towards the journey of self-realization, with focus on learning Jain concepts and practices. His interest includes Agam shastras, scholarly works on religious philosophies discovered during 500 BC, and practice of meditation. As a certified Yoga teacher, he loves to teach Meditative Yoga at a local fitness club. As a professional, Dr. Shah teaches in the area of Business Management, has several scholarly publications, and has organized several panel discussions on Spirituality.



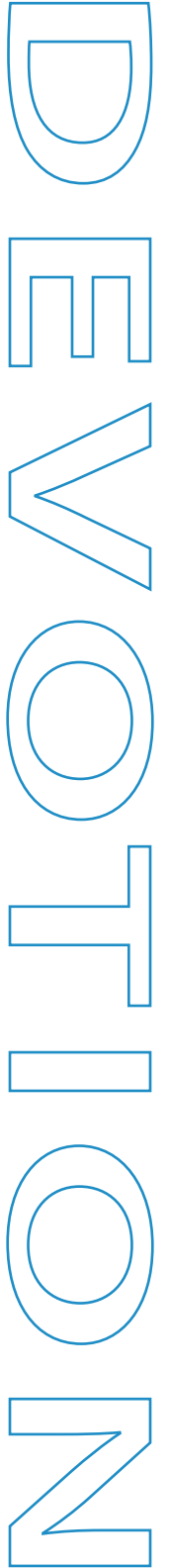
Pujya Panyas Dr. Arunvijayji Maharaj was born as Arunkumar in the Bijapur village of Pali district in Rajasthan, India. Bijapur is located near Hathundi, an ancient Rata Mahavir Tirth that existed 1700 years back. The deteriorated Hathundi Tirth was restored back under the leadership of Shri Javerchand Chandulal Kamdar, a local businessman. Acharya Shri Vijayvallabhsuriji Maharaj was invited to do the pratishtha and the reestablishment of the Tirth. On completion, Acharyaji highly impressed with the work, blessed Javerchandji, that he will soon see the fruits of pratishtha. Coincidentally, at the same time Javerchandji got news that his son Shri Gulabchand's wife Shrimati Shantabai had delivered a son named Arunkumar.

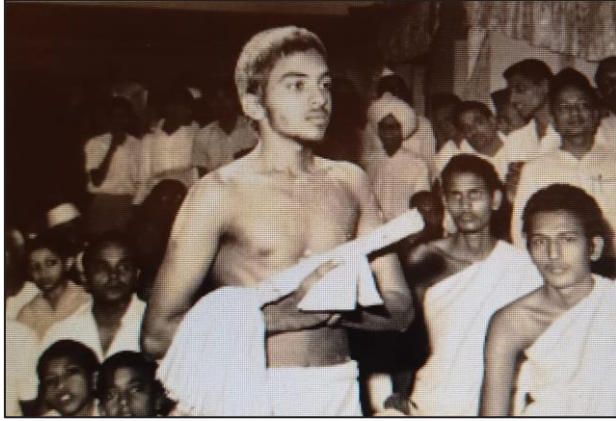
Shri Gulabchand Kamdar was part of a large family with jewelry business in several parts of India including Mumbai. Arunkumar, the eldest of the five siblings moved along with the family to Mumbai where he started attending school. His father enrolled him in a nearby Jain pathshala of Godiji. As a young boy, Arunkumar had a normal childhood growing up. The group of boys that attended Jain pathshala were always very noisy as they passed through the common areas of temple disturbing the sadhu /

shravaks engaged in Pratikraman / Samayak worship. To stop the daily noise disturbance, one day, the Guru Maharaj decided to invite the boys and tell them some stories. Things changed fast!

Guru Maharaj told stories of Mahavir Bhagwan every day to these kids who had now calmed down and were taking interest. The stories sparked a gentle fire of excitement in the heart of the very young Arunkumar, who started taking special interest. Every day after school, he would go straight to Guru Maharaj and spend time learning with great enthusiasm. Guru Maharaj responded with more inspirational teachings encouraging Arunkumar, who soon learned Samayak and many other Jain practices. Young Arunkumar's ambition was to become a sadhu and spread the knowledge of Mahavir Bhagwan to the entire world, a dream that would one day unfold. He started thinking of Diksha and Guru Maharaj nurtured his ambition and guided him to the next step of getting permission from family. The family elders refused, but they suggested that he do Updhaan and experience the sadhu life before taking such a big decision. Arunkumar agreed, finished the Updhaan successfully, and his determination grew even stronger. The family resisted equally hard. However, Arunkumar stood firm and one night, left the family home and went to Guru Maharaj, who accepted him and gave him diksha the next morning.

A fresh struggle emerged between the large powerful business family and the Jawaharnagar Jain Sangh which stood strong to protect. The strength of his determination was tested, and Arunkumar prevailed. At the tender age of 18, in June 1967, in a formal ceremony he got the diksha recognition from Premsuriji Maharaj. The gentle red glow that radiates in the sky before the sunrise symbolized by the name "Arun", had started to emerge, destined to spread the message of Mahavir Bhagwan like a rising sun. Young Arunmuni's pursuit of Gnan-Sadhna grew fast and strong and was recognized by his Guru Maharaj.

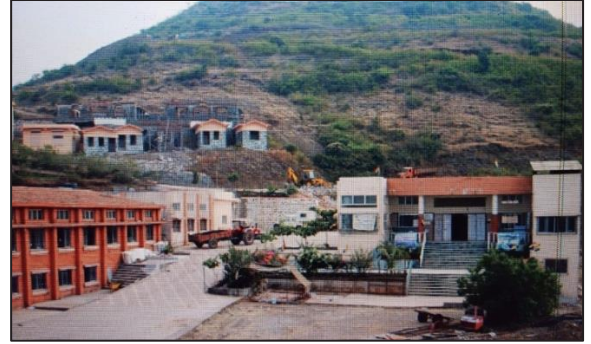




He started learning the grammar of several languages including Hindi, Gujrati, Marathi, Sanskrit, and Prakrit and quickly progressed from High school to College and earned BA, and MA degrees in Language and Literature followed by a second BA and MA in his favorite topic of interest viz. "Comparative philosophy and logics". Arunvijayji Maharaj was now into discourses, shibirs, and chaturmas gaining increased popularity in the community. He wrote his first book called "Karma tani gaati nyari". With each chaturmas he started writing additional books. Writing and Gnan-Sadhana were his passions. Guru Maharaj encouraged him to go even further and do Ph.D. and Arunvijayji went ahead and did Ph.D in comparative religions stressing the unique position of Jain religion's rejection of the Creator God and Creation theory. He developed logical arguments to support this proposition establishing the true form and nature of the God element. There were two research volumes published as a result and the Pune University awarded him the Ph.D. degree.

Arunvijayji further advanced in the study of Jain Agams and progressed to master those and earn the title of "Panyas" or "Pandit" which gave him the right and privileges to teach the Agam shastras. Now the sun of knowledge was rising in full brilliance, and there was nothing to stop Arunvijayji as he spread Mahavir Bhagwans knowledge all over the country in all directions with full radiance, in the form of pratishthas, chaturmas, shibirs and other discourses, writing books etc., till his Vihars took him back full circle to Hathundi Tirth, and Bijapur his birthplace. Arunvijayji started fresh initiatives to transform the Hathundi Tirth to the next stage building a beautiful temple and Samavasaran. The Vihars further took him across India and then to Pune in the West, where he established the Veeralayam Jain Tirth. "Veer" ie. brave is a short form for "Maha" veer or the "Bravest of brave". This is the first and only place in the world

where "Vishasthanak" mandir has been established, with a group of 20 small temples with Samavasaran in the center. Each Murti (idol) is made up of specially ordered beautifully colored semi-precious stones and crystals to inspire in the devotees the pure radiance of the gunas in a liberated Atma.



The Veeralayam (<http://www.veeralayam.com/>) is located on a scenic hill at the outskirts of Pune, India with a Jain temple, Jain research library, Ashram, Gaushala with 700 cows, modern lodging and kitchen facilities to take care of the guests. Arunvijayji's dream is to develop Veeralayam into a full-scale Jain Tirth Resort where individuals can come, stay, and develop themselves in all aspects of Jainism. The dream includes plans for Ayurvedic Hospital, school for Sadhu Sadhvis, Hostels, Research Facility, Vridhashram for Sadhu Sadhvis, Rehabilitation Center, and Orphanage. For donations and to get involved contact mahaveeralayam@gmail.com



For the last 54 years, Arunvijayji has been spreading the word of Mahaveer Bhagwaan all over India. With a very strong command of languages, he has organized several national and international conferences for research scholars in many different languages including Sanskrit. As a brilliant scholar, he has published many research papers, and more than 50 books, freely accessible through the JAINA elibrary <https://jainelibrary.org/>. Just type in Arunvijay in the Search box and you will access all the ebooks.

Arunvijayji is best known for his unique style of visual illustration on blackboard, simplifying various complex concepts of Jainism through simple diagrams allowing the audience to engage visually. In December 2019, Arunvijayji organized a conference for Jain scholars in Mumbai. Invited scholars, sadhus, sadhvis presented research papers on Shri Aandghanji and Devchandra Sthavans. Among the attendees was a visitor from USA attending as a guest of one of the invited scholars. He found the conference extremely intriguing and connected with Arunvijayji after the conference. Noticing his interest, Arunvijayji met with him one-on-one and gave him some fundamental ideas about Drayva Guna Paryaya and how the Atma connects with Pudgal to initiate the Karmic cycles of rebirth.

The visitor returned to USA and took those lecture notes and recordings and kept on learning and listening and had several questions about creation theory. He called up Arunvijayji in early 2020, who requested a video meeting to explain with diagrams. After several failed attempts things worked out with Zoom and 7 people from USA attended the first Zoom meeting to understand the theory behind creation.

A new door opened a universe of virtual Swadhaya (self-study). Our Utkrushta (highest degree) Punyas (good Karmas) were in Uday (bearing fruition) as the Nimit (cause) in the form of Arunvijayji appeared in our homes, crossing all barriers of space and time, across the globe, just to provide us that Durlabh (extremely rare) Shubh Yoga (good connection) with the timeless message of the Tirthankaras.

The small group urged Arunvijayji to continue, and soon there were weekly discourses on Jain foods, followed by Uttaradhyayan sutra and the ball started rolling and Arunvijayji's dream started unfolding, stretching to audiences all across the globe. Fast forward 2021, Arunvijayji now teaches a full schedule of about ten, one year-long courses spread out through the week, to a world-wide audience with one course on Karma Philosophy catered specially to USA audience, sponsored by JAINA (details <https://www.jaina.org/>). Master of many languages Arunvijayji easily deciphers the language of Agam shastras ie. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Ardha Magdhi and explains in simple Hindi/ Gujarati/ Marwari/ Marathi/English.

At the same time, the JAINA 2021 virtual conference was inviting proposals for the conference. The conference coordinator was none other than our present esteemed editor of the Jain Digest you are

reading. When he was approached with a proposal for a presentation on Karma philosophy on behalf of Arunvijayji, the name immediately rang a bell, and things connected full circle as memories of his late father taking Diksha under Arunvijayji Maharaj floated back in his mind. Truly a small world; shrinking the space time barrier between Pune and LA. He was overjoyed with humility and excitement and felt honored to have Arunvijayji as a presenter in the Jaina 2021 conference.

Among the many other year-long virtual courses run presently, are Navkaar Meditation, Jain Diet, Gandharwaad, Karma Philosophy, Shri Devchandra Chovisi, Religion and Philosophy, Jain Meta Physics, and Samyak Darshan Global Jain class, all live streamed to many countries including North America, Europe, Australia and India. For all past lectures <https://www.youtube.com/c/veeralayamdrarunvijay>

For joining any current on-going live classes and schedule contact mahaveeralayam@gmail.com. Options to earn a one-year Certificate, three-year Diploma or a Degree are available from the Mahaveer Research Foundation, Veralayam.



In December 2021, he was awarded the prestigious **Doctor of Literature (D.Litt.)** doctoral degree through Delhi University, probably making him the "one and only one" Jain sadhu who is a Panyas with two BA, MA and two doctoral degrees; Ph.D and D.Litt.

MAHVEER
RESEARCH
FOUNDATION

On January 9, 2022, the Delhi University Vice Chancellor Shrimati Anju Bhandari and Registrar Dr. K. D. Arya both travelled to Mumbai and awarded the D. Litt. Degree to Maharajsaheb. Maharajsaheb's Pujya Mataji Shri Shantaben Gulabchand Kamdar, age 96, also attended the ceremony.



Proudly holding the thesis book “Adhyatmik Vikaas Yaatra”, Pujya Shri Shantaben has been living like a sadhvi in her home, done tapasya of 30 Varsi taps and since last 20 years has done loch every year;

thus continuously inspiring Pujya Maharajsaheb to relentlessly progress in his Gyan-Sadhana.

At the age of 74, Pujya Panyas Dr. Arunvijayji Maharaj continues to live the dream of spreading Mahaveer Bhagwan's message tirelessly, relentlessly and with ever increasing vigor to help the liberation of every soul he touches. The current hectic weekly class schedule, shibirs, daily kriyas, morning evening local discourses, vihars, book writing, and book publishing does not stop him from progressing in his own personal Gnan-Sadhna and research.

We bow in utmost reverence and deepest gratitude, expressing our heart-felt Anumodana, and pray that our beloved Pujya Maharajsaheb continues to get the divine strength and support as he fulfills his life's dream enlightening our lives with the ever flowing Gnan-Dhara, unlocking the secrets of the puzzle of the Agamshastras, piece by piece, connecting carefully, as the pictures of the path of liberation reveals itself on the Blackboard differently, each time, again, and again, and again!

We are grateful to JAINA and the editor of Jain Digest, for featuring the amazing, inspirational story of Pujya Maharajsaheb.

Links to a few playlists of videos on various topics by Pujya Maharajsaheb:

1) Uttaradhyayan Sutra

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOvLisO0qdA&list=PLi3vTa_oBFFetI5O7cTXJQZEw4rE_AQSE

2) Jain Religion and Philosophy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYtui_rRMug&list=PLi3vTa_oBFFf_ZdJBNv8yc_bgdngWaP9

3) Study of Jain Karma Philosophy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFFeFUdkFraA&list=PLi3vTa_oBFFfru5VwzdSfNUTgzXXHPO

4) Samyak Darshan

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l49AaUb6SiY&list=PLi3vTa_oBFFdJkfc5zQGtd0ibrdI2Blsv

5) Study of Granthi Bhed

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RQ1uOsZYo&list=PLi3vTa_oBFFfGDp59eHvamu4X0IWov81Y

Finding Jainism in Cultures Around the World

By Riya Patel



Riya Patel is a student at the University of Texas at Austin studying chemical engineering. She has been the YJA South Regional Coordinator in 2020-2021 and loves to be involved in her local Jain community.

(This article was originally published in Young Minds Magazine in September 2020)

Growing up, I often struggled with my Indian identity. While attending a predominantly white school in the middle of North Carolina, questions about my “missing red dot” and jokes about being a “Hindu cow worshipper” were a daily occurrence. I let this happen for years — masking my own culture and never correcting, nor educating others about my fascinating religion. It wasn’t until I saw my grandma openly practicing Jainism and her absolute devotion to it that a change occurred within me. From blatantly telling servers she will not eat meat due to religious beliefs to clearly going out of her way in public to avoid stepping on grass — that sparked a realization. Maybe there was no need to hide my cultural and religious beliefs?

From then onwards, I began to slowly open-up and have some of the most interesting conversations with others about how aspects of my seemingly uncommon religion can be seen around the world.

Japan, Asia



I once was explaining how one of Jainism’s fundamental beliefs is *Anekantavada* and elaborated on the importance of multiplicity of viewpoints since there is no singular one that is correct. That is when, Aya, my Japanese friend told me about a practice called *Kintsugi*: when one accidentally breaks a piece of pottery, it is not thrown away, but rather mended back together by applying gold on the cracks to create a new, beautiful piece. She explained how by looking

at the destroyed pottery from a new point of view, it is able to become something more special and valuable than before, but failing to do so would cause this potential artwork to end up in a trashcan. This could be applied to people too. We cannot judge them from what we see, but rather must change perspectives to understand their underlying inner beauty. After hearing from her, I was able to share the story of the six blind men feeling small parts of the elephant and coming up with different ideas of what the creature might be. Seeing how the idea of multiple points of view can completely change one’s reaction to a situation was quite fascinating and emphasized its need to be applied in all situations.

Colombia, South America



One of my best friends in middle school was of Colombian descent. Aside from enjoying endless arepas and cheese empanadas at her house, one of the most notable memories with her was when I learned about *Tranquilo*. I had just dropped my brand new phone and was worried that I cracked it when her mother said nothing but “Tranquilo!” I found out that this is a word very commonly used in Colombia to tell one to not stress over little things and just relax. The idea of not obsessing over materialistic matters reminded me of *Aparigraha*, the importance of letting go. Much like how *Aparigraha* is a key part of Jainism, *Tranquilo* is heavily embedded in the vocabulary of people in Colombia. While for Jains this concept also helps avoid the four key internal passions of *Krodha*

(anger), *Maan* (ego), *Maya* (greed), and *Lobh* (deceit) to limit unnecessary bondage so liberation can be attained, Colombians also intend to avoid these by attempting to stray from unnecessary tension to live a more peaceful life. Despite being from opposite sides of the world, I was able to explain to my friend how these underlying beliefs were not much different.

Iceland, Europe



After a friend came back from her trip to Iceland during winter break, the first thing she told me about was not the breathtaking lagoons and the waterfalls, but rather a shocking tradition they had called *Jolabokafloð* — translating to:

“The Christmas Book Flood.” On Christmas Eve, people gift one another books, not iPhones and PS4s,

and then read together. In fact, the *Bokatidindi’s* delivery, or catalog of all books published that year, is what starts off the holiday season. The clear importance of reading in Iceland parallels the importance of education in Jain and Indian culture. This can be seen through the determination to travel long distances to reach schools and hours spent flipping through textbooks in India. Particularly, Jainism itself also has an emphasis on *Samyag Gyan* (right knowledge) with it being one of the three jewels or *Ratna trayi*. While people in Iceland are not directly aiming for *Keval Gyan* (ultimate knowledge), they are acquiring *Punya* from the selfless giving and are gaining general knowledge from all their books.

My Local Community

In science classes, I had some fascinating conversations with my teachers about how Karmic particles are thought to behave similarly to the photons and electrons we learned about in the lecture. I also saw similarities between being taught the Law of Conservation of Mass in class, which states matter can neither be created nor destroyed, much like how Jainism believes in non-creationism. Not only was I able to see how it is hidden in traditions around the world, but also in Jainism’s compatibility with universal scientific beliefs.

More importantly, I saw how Jainism had the potential to foster acts of kindness. For instance, when one of my teachers found out about my *Atthai* (an eight-day fast where one cannot consume any food and can only have water between the times of sunrise and sunset), he made me a bed out of scrap cardboard, T-shirts, and other materials in case I wanted to take a nap. He then went out of his way to look up my schedule and email all my teachers saying I could come there to sleep. I was amazed to see his extreme generosity and quick creativity to put something together without me even mentioning it. Without knowing, that teacher had acquired so much *Punya*, and his simple act of kindness is something I will never forget. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

Another instance of these realizations was during my previous year’s *Atthai* at a cross country meet where one of the other runners overheard me talking about how I was in the middle of an extended water fast and was feeling a little tired. During the second mile of the race, she noticed me slowing down and giving out, so she locked elbows with me and picked up the pace. She pushed me to not give up; though the panting she said phrases like “You got this! Keep it up!” and was the reason I finished the race strong. From hearing about a Jain practice, she went from being an opponent to a motivator. In these situations, the generosity that was facilitated by people being exposed to Jainism led to a feeling of warmth that is indescribable by words — a feeling I will never forget.

From seeing ties of Jainism in other continents around the world, I began to realize that my religion is not so taboo after all. Although it may be a small minority that many people do not know about, its key values are part of something larger than life. Rather than hiding my *Sanskriti* (culture) and *Dharam* (religion), I learned to take pride in it. I find myself using Jain morals in daily decision-making or even writing about it in my personal statement. As an Indian American, it can be hard to balance both cultures, but it is important to stay close to your roots and not be afraid to share your beliefs. It may be easy to lose touch, but making a conscious effort to have unique conversations can lead to many memorable revelations. Seeing how Jainism can be applied to almost anything in the world was fascinating and promoted my spiritual awareness. Jainism resonates not only in temples, but rather is present everywhere I look now, and all it took was an open mind.

There indeed was no need to hide my cultural and religious beliefs.

Religions for Peace: Generations in Dialogue

By Harshita Jain



Harshita is a senior at Rutgers University studying Biomedical Engineering and Business Administration, and is passionate about service and social innovation, as well as Jainism and Jain education. She has previously served on the YJA Daytime Convention Committee (2020) and YJA Executive Board as Director of Education (2019-21). Harshita is currently involved with the YJA PR Convention Committee (2022), and serves on the Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) admin team and the Rutgers University Jain Association as co-President. She loves traveling, running, and taking photos in her free time. You can reach Harshita with questions, feedback, and Jainism learnings at harshita.jain@yja.org.



The pilot's voice came in through the flight's announcement system. As I put my seatbelt on and pulled out the book I brought to read on the upcoming journey, it hit me - I really was about to embark on my first solo international trip.

A few months prior, I had been invited to attend the Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue. An interfaith conference organized by [Religions for Peace](#) (RFP), an entity affiliated with the United Nations, and the Religion and Foreign Policy Department of the German Federal Foreign Office, this annual event brings together faith leaders and diplomatic officials in a space meant to foster open discussion and collaboration with regards to interreligious affairs. I would be attending as a youth participant on behalf of Jainism and the Young Jains of America organization (YJA).

After landing, a shuttle bus took me and a few other passengers who came in on the same flight to our

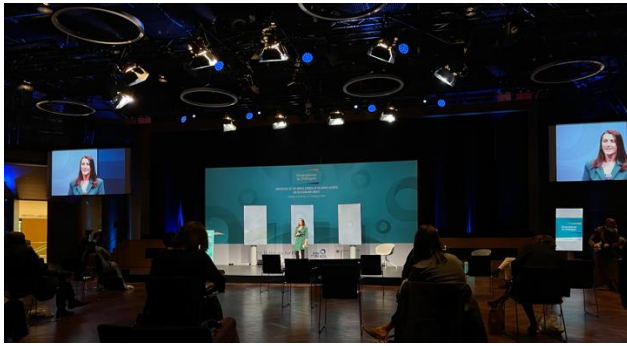
hotels. We drove through the hills of Switzerland, a few small towns in Austria, and into southern Germany all within an hour. After putting our things down at our hotel, we caught a ride to the Inselhalle, or "island hall," where we checked in for the conference and had lunch. The weather was beautiful, and I spent the remainder of the afternoon walking around Lindau, seeing the Bavaria Lion and lighthouse, and having fruit sorbet in town.



After an introductory address early the next morning by RFP Secretary General Professor Azza Karam, the four-day conference officially began. Sessions ranged from keynote addresses to panel debates, and from focused roundtable discussions to lightning talks by young changemakers. Below are a few programming highlights.

Day 1: Faith, Diplomacy and Public Health

COVID-19 and its global effects, as well as the role of faith and diplomatic actors in combating misinformation and promoting positive public health practices, were discussed on this day.



Day 2: Peace and Security

How could interreligious dialogue contribute to peace in territories and countries plagued by violence? As one speaker put it: "If you don't want religion to be part of the problem, it must be part of the solution."



Day 3: Environment

We conversed about the shared climate conflict that all communities would feel the effects of if action was not taken. A comprehensive document calling for change was drafted.

Day 4: Humanitarianism

On the final half-day, the urgent and pertinent humanitarian crisis affecting Afghanistan was brought to the spotlight. RFP acknowledged the need for, and went on to develop action items to put out a statement against the state of affairs in the country.



Listening to and participating in so many conversations gave me access to novel frameworks and approaches I could bring to challenges I faced in the United States. In between high-powered discourse, I was able to interact with people in all kinds of diplomatic and religious roles over hot chocolate and vegan desserts. I left the conference with new ideas, insights, and information beyond anything I could have imagined. I also left with friends from countries around the world - Sweden, Monaco, Jerusalem, Spain, and more - and German chocolate for my siblings back home.



Posing for a selfie with my friends from around the world (I am the fourth person from the right).

And while traveling to Germany was an experience in itself, I learned several lessons and met some incredible people from all walks of life during the time there. I wanted to quickly share three of my takeaways.

1. There is so much for our community to learn and share when it comes to other organizations and religious institutions, and the way they have built strong, peaceful, and accepting communities. Interfaith dialogue is central to achieving that.
2. Service to the Jain community through Sadharmik Bhakti is matched in importance by service to the larger community. Seeing others implementing programs and volunteering to help those beyond their religion, as well as how much good they were able to achieve, was an indication of how much good we can do, as well.
3. Presence on the international stage is key. So many people I talked to didn't know about Jainism, but were keen to learn more about our principles and lifestyle. By being a part of these conversations, we can contribute to worldwide efforts in issues such as public health, environmentalism, and more through the lens of Jain teachings.

Of course, I say all these with the caveat that we should seek guidance from Maharaj Sahebs in coordinating such efforts to ensure we do so properly.

One final takeaway:
Conversations can be so powerful. It is by sharing one's story and one's voice that others can better understand their experiences and background and be more empathetic as a result.

Time and time again, I was reminded of the privileges I am so much more grateful for today. I met people who faced the threats of civil war and religious persecution, and of political turmoil and security infringement, every single day of their lives. The problems I face are so different from

theirs, and it was not until I interacted with and learned from them that I began to understand the issues we must work together to overcome. Speaking to officials and students and leaders and activists over those four days irrevocably changed my mindset for the better, and for that, I am thankful.



On a personal note, I wanted to thank Mamta Aunty (Dr. Mamta Shaha, Chair, JAINA Women's Committee) for sharing this opportunity with YJA and therefore giving me the chance to have this experience.

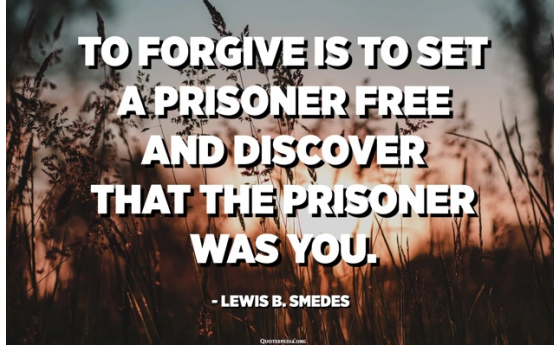
In addition to the lesson shared, I also was able to develop a greater sense of empathy by hearing from and interacting with those of other backgrounds and faiths and returned motivated to create positive change myself. I am hopeful that more Jain youth will get the chance to experience something similar in the near future!

Find a summary of the event here:
<https://www.rfp.org/conference-of-the-world-council-of-religious-leaders-on-faith-and-diplomacy-generations-in-dialogue-event-summary/>

Find a quick video with clips from my travel journey here: <https://youtu.be/eg4HuY7i8n4>

If anything I said may have gone against the teachings of Mahavir Bhagwan, I humbly ask for forgiveness. Michhami Dukkadam!

COMMUNITY RESPONSES: PRACTICING FORGIVENESS



(During October and November last year, we had requested our community members to share their experiences in practicing forgiveness. We thank all of those who sent in their responses. The goal was to bring more awareness towards this important teaching of Jain religion that helps us purify. By sharing such stories, we all assist each other in our spiritual journey.

Although many of us don't feel like sharing such stories, we encourage you to read stories included below and at the links listed at the end of this article; with the hope that these stories will enrich your spiritual lives.)

Asking for forgiveness in a work environment By Surendrasingh Singhvi

I was hired by a Jewish company and the number two executive with a Harvard MBA was not very comfortable with me because I was PhD from Columbia university and I made recommendations to top management based on analysis and facts which did not support his ideas. Hence, he was very negative towards me. I talked with Acharya Sushilmuniji and he suggested that on the Samvatsari day I should visit him in his office and ask for forgiveness for hurting his feelings, knowingly or unknowingly. After I did that, he was very pleased and since then his attitude towards me changed considerably and he started appreciating my work. I feel forgiveness has helped me in my job. I have used this approach many times with my friends & relatives; and everyone has responded very positively.

Comment: Michhami Dukkadam, forget and forgive is a great principle given to us by Lord Mahavir.

Unload your stress and come close to the people you love – By Mahendra B Shah

I am 75 years old. After my marriage in 1971, I behaved as a macho guy because I was the bread winner. I had developed a few bad habits to behave as a macho person. After several years I learned from the books by Dada Bhagwan and Shrimad Rajchandra to look at your own faults if you want to achieve Mukti and make spiritual progress in life.

I did ask for forgiveness to my wife for all the past years. I felt free. Since then whenever she reminded me of my past mistake, I asked for an apology with a statement that "You are correct, but I do not remember that mistake; but I will still say 'I am sorry'. This made our relationship much healthier.

FORGIVENESS MAKES YOU STRONG AND FREE. 🙏🙏🙏

Leading a happy and blissful life through Forgiveness - By Ramesh C Shah

One of the basic tenets of Jainism is Ahimsa or non-violence. When I was young I did give importance to non-violence in action by practicing vegetarianism, but did not give importance to non-violence in thoughts and speech. I used to get upset easily with people who did not agree with me. This led to arguments causing feelings of anger in me leading to unhappiness. Later in my life I started the practice of forgiving others. I will give you an example.

About four years ago I decided to write a book about my memoirs. I had prepared a rough draft of about 200 pages. I was looking for an experienced editor to edit my book. I found such a person on the internet and met with him in a nearby restaurant. He impressed with his English and editorial talents. I signed an agreement with him after talking with two of his references and gave him a check of \$1000. After that he stopped calling me. In the past I would have been very angry with him for cheating me. I did not try to find him or harass him. But I forgave and forgot about him. I found another good editor and published my book named "A Journey Through Time and Culture" available on Amazon Books. This shows the importance of observing the Jain teaching of forgiveness in leading a happy and blissful life.

Forgiveness is an Art - By Apurva Talsania

During Paryushan we had taken a vow to do 10 Ek Tanu, remembered to forgive all the differences between parents, spouses & kids and do Darshan daily to repent for our sins. We have been eating Jain food for the past 30 years.

We had a rough last year. We made sure to follow Jain Principles. We educated Non-Jains about our rich culture and Included kids in understanding the art of forgiveness when someone makes you upset at school or home.
Comment: Forgiveness is an art. You need to listen, understand & then react to difficult situations.

Forgiveness - a great virtue to incorporate in daily practice - By Nidhi Shah

Forgiveness is a great virtue to incorporate in daily practice. Relationships are like rose petals they blossom when they are together in love and harmony and when the petals fall apart due to extreme weather conditions that is similar to having arguments in relationships and not forgiving one another.

When I was young and won the argument in the relationship, I felt very proud of myself. But when I lost the argument in the relationship, I felt terrible and could not forgive the person. I was running after ego to prove myself right every time. Today I realized how wrong I was in my approach and narrow outlook of thinking. In reality, the truth will reveal by itself at the right time and the individual does not need to prove it to others.

Many times, in my life I only saw things from my perspective. After undergoing Emotional Intelligence training, I became more sensitive, empathetic, and started seeing things from others perspective. This has made a great impact in social awareness and forgiving others for their mistakes. One time I was annoyed with a person for several years. After attending Jain Paryushan lectures on forgiveness and Sister Shivani's lectures online, I forgave the other person and felt very light, pure, and happy from within. I realized that forgiveness comes from having a noble intention, open heart of compassion & well-being for others, accepting people as they are and not forcing them to change even when they make mistakes. I would like to express gratitude to my parents who reinforced the concept of forgiveness and motivated me to practice forgiveness in my daily life.

Forgive those who do not treat you well - By Girish B. Shah

My sister came to India to celebrate Diwali with us. We also, as per her wish, went to south India, Shravanbelgola, to have darshan of Bahubali Bhagwan. We spent a lot of money during her three weeks staying with us.

And when we came here, she forgot everything we did for her in India. She kicked me out in one month and she did not behave like my dear sister. When she was diagnosed of breast cancer, we forgave her for mistreating us and until her last breath, we supported her and I gave a funeral speech highlighting good qualities of her nature

Forgiveness is for our own peace of mind and stability - Anonymous

I used to read about Forgiveness from different sources. I gained more knowledge and awareness of this important concept through Jaina publication. Over the years and especially during the pandemic, I have realized that Forgiveness is all about us - for our peace of mind and stability, promoting positive attitude, willing to let go, and appreciating what we have. I am trying to eliminate negative feeling towards everyone in my life. Maintaining respect and distance is one way to practice Forgiveness.

Comment: I liked this concept of sharing our views using 250 words. I hope I can read everyone's views. There is so much to learn from each other.

Forgive and Forget: Don't wait too long - Anonymous

I met Ankur during my first year in college in Mumbai and over the next two years we became best friends. We went to college together, studied together, went to movies and sports events together, drove around on his two-wheeler and hung out at each other's homes. My parents loved Ankur as well and always enjoyed his sense of humor.

One time while I was away from home, Ankur gave ride to my father on his two wheeler to a store. Unfortunately, while coming back home, Ankur took a sharp turn, lost balance and the two-wheeler fell crushing my father's leg. Ankur was not hurt. He took my father to the hospital. Ankur felt very bad and apologized to my father many times. My father stayed calm and forgave him. Over the next two weeks my father stayed in the hospital recovering from the injuries.

I was very upset with Ankur when I heard about the accident and blamed him for his carelessness. I was also angry that during my father's stay at the hospital, he did not show up or call. Soon after this incident, I moved away to another city for higher studies.

I met Ankur after a few years. We went for a long walk, and I finally asked him about why he did not care to check on my father while he was in hospital. With tears in his eyes he said, "I really wanted to, but felt so guilty and ashamed for my mistake. I thought that seeing me will hurt you all even more. I am so sorry." Needless to say, we hugged each other. I also apologized for keeping that anger within me and not giving him chance to explain. With this simple act of asking for forgiveness and forgiving each other our relationship became joyful again.

Forgiveness is Universal - Compiled by Patrick O. Barnes

Of all the blessings one could count forgiveness as especially powerful to imagine. By purifying the imagination through its engagement, one can out-picture the Soulic Christhood within and therefore conquer with equanimity as apportioned by its purity.

"One should forgive, under any injury" says the Mahabharata. "It hath been said that the continuation of the species is due to man's being forgiven. Forgiveness is holiness; by forgiveness the Universe is held together. Forgiveness is the might of the mighty. Forgiveness is sacrifice. Forgiveness is quiet of mind. Forgiveness and gentleness are the qualities of the self-possessed. They represent Eternal virtue." Nonviolence is the natural outgrowth of the law of forgiveness and love.

To forgive sin and its results is to heal the life. The forgiveness of sin is the healing of mind, heart, and will. This is more than changing beliefs. You may change beliefs without healing wrong desire. You may turn the mind from its outlook on life, and thus help it to apprehend something of the true vision; but to accomplish healing, the true vision must be made concrete in life. The forgiveness of sin is the healing of desire and the redemption of the will.

As we all cultivate the flowers of compassion and mercy within the sanctuary of our Soul's desire, may we learn to forgive instinctually, immediately, naturally as we become increasingly oriented to the Divine within, that we may conquer any sense of separation from its presence.

Sources:

"Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda

"Life's Mysteries Unveiled" by John Todd Ferrier

Links to some published stories about Forgiveness

A Story of Forgiveness - Just Between Us

<https://justbetweenus.org/overcoming-adversity/finding-forgiveness/a-story-of-forgiveness/>

10 Inspiring Stories of Extreme Forgiveness That Will Lift Your Spirits

<https://www.rd.com/list/inspiring-forgiveness-stories/>

Stories of forgiveness - The Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/12/20/stories-forgiveness/>

Video by Jack Kornfield: Forgive for You

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AKHh95hIAY>



Conversation with Paul Rodney Turner



In 2021, JAINA's Ahimsa Meals and Fasting Committee surpassed the goal of serving 100,000 meals to the needy. This was mainly possible due to a global organization, Food for Life Global (FFLG), which serves meals around the world for as little as 50 cents a meal. We are grateful to Paul Rodney Turner, FFLG's Executive Director, for creating a special donation link so that generous donors like you could donate to serve Jain vegan meals. To learn more about the compassionate, humanitarian work Food for Life is doing, we interviewed Paul. Here is an excerpt of the interview:

JD: What is the history of the creation of Food for Life Global?

Paul: Food for Life Global is a modern-day revival of the ancient Vedic culture of spiritual hospitality. Since the beginning of recorded time, sharing of food has been a fundamental part of the civilized world. In India, such hospitality was based on the understanding of the spiritual equality of all beings. The charity was initially founded in 1995 but moved offices to Europe in 2015. In 2017, it was once again reestablished in Delaware, USA and now serves an international network of 265 projects in 60 countries.

JD: What is the mission and vision of the organization?

Paul: To bring about peace and prosperity in the world through the liberal distribution of pure plant-based meals prepared with loving intention. Food for Life Global pursues its mission by providing organizational and operating support to Food for Life's vegan hunger relief programs.

JD: What is the scope of your work, e.g. number of countries served, employees, volunteers, supporters?

Paul: Food for Life Global oversees a network of 265 affiliates in 60 countries that serve between 1 and 2 million meals daily. The charity is mostly volunteer based with about 2000 volunteers running most of the projects. The FFL.org website receives millions of visitors every year and the nonprofit has a social media reach of over 50,000

JD: How are the funds received in donations used?

Paul: 70% of money received for donations goes to programs, including providing freshly cooked vegan meals to people in need. In some cases, our projects are subsidized by government or corporate sponsorship.

JD: How is FFLG able to provide meals for an incredible 50 cents each?

Paul: This is an average price. In some cases, the meals can cost over \$1.50 each and in some cases 25 cents. It all depends on the local food prices and if the project is subsidized by government or corporate sponsors.

JD: Do you have any sample menus of the Jain vegan meals served?

Paul: We have Kichadi, Biryani, rice and sabji (vegetables), flat rice and sabji and sometimes halwa of semolina.

JD: What are some of the lessons learned over the years?

Paul: Food is the great communicator and has the ability to break down all barriers of communication and division. Therefore, at FFLG we believe the solution to solving social issues like hunger are through using the power of food to unite the world around a global "dinner table" of peace and prosperity. Furthermore, we are convinced that evolution of consciousness begins when we master the tongue and that is why we only serve vegan meals prepared with love.

We once again thank Paul and Food for Life Global for their collaboration with us and look forward to working with them again in the future. You can read more about Food for Life Global at: <https://ffl.org/mission/>

Jain Academy of Scholars: An Excellent Opportunity for Scholars

The Jain Academy of Scholars (JAS) was established in June 2020 with the main objective of carrying out and promoting study and research on Jainism by

- 1) Supporting concepts of Jain Darshan with scientific methodology and logic and
- 2) Enriching scientific theories by introducing Jain concepts

JAS is a unique forum where exchange of ideas related to Jain philosophy and its practical applications takes place between scholars globally. It was created with the vision that it will act as a 'Think Tank' and carry out research in Jain Philosophy; a topic that has not been given much importance in recent times.

Currently about 50 renowned Jain scholars from India and abroad are involved in this academic activity. Several Sant scholars representing different Jain sects are mentors of the Academy.

The Academy holds weekly on-line lectures by world renowned experts on various aspects of Jain Philosophy and Science. When serious discussion is required, Round Table Discussions are held to thrash out various points of views and arrive at some logical point of view.

JAS also publishes a periodical titled "Proceedings of JAS" containing original research papers. The inaugural issue deals with topics like modern view of Jain Philosophy, Physical Structures of Matter, Violence and Non-violence in daily life and effect of meditation on aggressiveness by accomplished professionals. It also brings out latest scientific news about Jain concepts.

Other issues attempt to resolve the conflict between Jain Loka and Modern Cosmology and one issue is devoted to Gyan Mimasa. Svetambar and Digambar Scriptures and modern topics of philosophy and science are available in a library at JAS headquarters in Ahmedabad.

JAS was a knowledge partner in organising an International Conference on Science and Jain Philosophy on the topic of Consciousness, which was organised by Florida International University, Miami, USA. The academy also supports academic projects, and the faculty is available as Research Guides.

The Academy has instituted several awards for outstanding contributions to Jain philosophy, work of excellence and appreciation awards to scholars selected globally.

Fellowship and membership of JAS is open to all who are desirous of understanding the fundamentals of Jain darshan and carrying out research and academic activities.

Scholars and students may contact nnbhandari@yahoo.com or +91 98240 77890