

JainDigest

October 2019

Volume 12



A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America

DEVOTION

EDUCATION

COMPASSION

INSPIRATION

INFORMATION

CONVERSATIONS

TRANSFORMATION

YOUNG GENERATION

Editor's Note



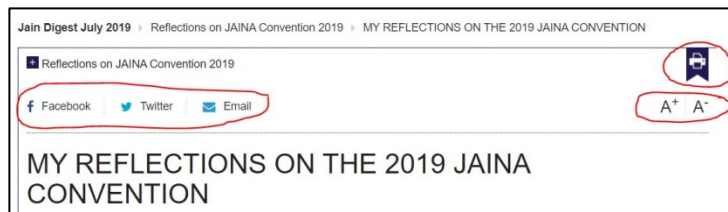
Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

For the past four years, in each issue of Jain Digest, we have focused on a specific theme. In general, more than half the magazine was dedicated to the articles on that theme. As announced in the JAINA Newsletter on August 23rd, with this issue of Jain Digest, we are increasing the scope of the type of articles we publish. The goal is to cater to readers with varied interests so that everyone finds something of their interest in the magazine.

In addition to the Editor's Note and JAINA President's Message, the magazine now has 8 sections – Compassion, Devotion, Education, Information, Inspiration, Transformation, Young Generation and Conversations. We have assigned a Section Editor to most of the sections. At the beginning of each section, we have provided a brief description of the type of articles we will publish in that section. Each section will have 1 to 3 articles in it.

Even though the structure of the magazine has changed and scope increased, our basic criteria for the content remains the same – to bring you articles that are related to Jain principles, values and virtues. Hence we believe that you will continue to benefit spiritually by reading the articles. We would love to hear back from you. Please feel free to give your candid feedback via email at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com or fill-out a form at <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>



We hope you enjoyed reading the JAINA Convention coverage in the July issue and saw some of the interesting videos we had included. Please note the various icons shown at the top of each article. By clicking on these you can share the article with others via Facebook, Twitter and Email. You can increase or

decrease the font size while reading online as well as print the article for offline reading.

In this issue, in the **Compassion** Section, read about the recent chicken rescue operation in an article by Shaleen Shah of LuvInArms animal sanctuary. And Leo Babauta of zenhabits.net shows us 7 ways of developing compassion. In the **Devotion** Section, learn about the life and teachings of the revered KundKund Acharya and get inspired by a young Acharya Udayvallabh Surishwarji who is well known for his “Perfecting Youth Sessions” seminars. In the **Education** Section, read an introspective article about the importance of our human birth with the help of a very illustrious painting known as “Madhu Bindu”. In another article in this section you will learn about the reviving art of Calligraphy.

Mahatma Gandhiji's 150 birthday was celebrated world over. Watch the videos by clicking on the links we have provided in an article in the **Information** Section. And also read about the upcoming “Jainism and Math” Symposium. In the **Inspiration** Section, we have included a part of Nipun Mehta's speech from the 2015 JAINA Convention on Humility. And don't miss very inspiring reflections Erika Abrams has provided on the JAINA Convention 2019. She was one of the invited speakers who travelled from Jaipur to attend the convention. And although many of us don't want to go back to the agonizing memories of 9/11, it is good to recall how the human values of compassion, empathy were exhibited by so many to help others survive without worrying about their own survival. Read about two such stories.

In the **Transformation** Section, Hema Pokharna shares her transformative experience of doing the Updhan under the guidance of Acharya Udayvallabh Surishwarji. And learn about how to let go of an old regret from a personal experience shared by Christine Carter of Greater Good Science Center. A story of Mahamantri Abhaykumar is included for our young readers in the **Young Generation** Section. This section also includes an award winning essay “Discovering Jainism” by Apeksha Bandi. Priyanka Shah's interview of a young musician Kanika Patawari is our first such conversational article – included in the **Conversations** Section. Thanks to Priyanka – Editor-in-Chief of YJPerspectives - for providing us this and the article by Apeksha.

Hope you enjoy reading these varied, enriching articles. We look forward to hearing from you.

In Seva,

Dilip Parekh

JAINA President's Message



Jai Jinendra!

I hope you and your family members are in sukh-sata and had wonderful Paryushan/Das Lakshana celebrations at your Jain Centers. With your love and support, JAINA continues to reach new heights and make progress in achieving its vision.

I am glad to share with you a number of initiatives JAINA has worked on during the last few months and has planned for the near future.

Recent Events:

Paryushan 2019

Daily newsletter during Paryushan & Das Lakshana Parva 2019 was sent out. We hope it has helped in enhancing your efforts of spiritual upliftment.

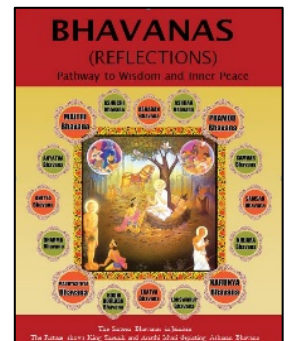
JAINA plans to recognize tapasvis who had done tapashcharya of 8 plus Upvas for adults and 3 plus Upvas by youth during the Parva by publishing their names in e-newsletter and on the JAINA website with their pictures.

JAINA has published a book on Amazon titled "Bhavanas (Reflections) Pathway to Wisdom and Inner Peace" during Paryushan. The book has articles in English about all sixteen Bhavanas. Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai and Pramodaben Chitrabhanu have written foreword for the book. We thank them for their support.

The book is available for \$9.99 on Amazon.

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/1686644698?ref =pe 3052080 397514860](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1686644698?ref_=pe_3052080_397514860)

If you are interested in ordering larger quantities (50 or more) to offer it as Prabhavana, we can order the books for you at a 40% discount! Please contact Dilip Parekh at 310-721-5947 or dilipjparekh@gmail.com



Howdy Modi Event

A five member JAINA delegation led by President Mahesh Wadher and First Vice President Haresh Shah participated in "Howdy Mody" mega event in Houston on September 22nd.



YJP National Conference

YJP hosted its 3rd Annual National Conference in Chicago, IL from October 18-20, 2019.

Upcoming Events:

- The annual meeting of the JAINA Board of Directors, Committees and EC is going to be held at Siddhachalam from November 8-10, 2019.
- JAINA is partnering with Jain Academic Education Research Center to organize JAB (Jain Academic Bowl) competition at University of Mumbai on January 11, 2020.
- JAINA is planning the first Jain International Conference in collaboration with World Jain Confederation in Ahmedabad India on January 18-19, 2020.

- JAINA and the Jain Center of Greater Boston (JCGB) are planning for an International Symposium on: “Jainism and Mathematics: Ancient Wisdom Meets the Modern Age” on June 20th and 21st 2020 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston, USA.

Other Initiatives:

JAINA Website

The Technology Committee is revamping and building a user-friendly JAINA website.

JAINA Calendar – 2020



The Calendar Committee has prepared another stunning JAINA Calendar 2020 and will be mailed soon. If you haven't subscribed to the calendar yet, you can do it on www.jaina.org and get your copy.

Jain Population in North America

JAINA has established the Jain Population Survey committee which will conduct a survey of all the Jains living in North America.

Resort style Housing for Jain Seniors

JAINA has created a new initiative for Resort style Housing for Jain Seniors. The goal is to create an environment for Jain Seniors to help them live with dignity, security, spirituality, health services, and other challenges. To support this initiative, we have requested every center to send out the below link to all their senior members to collect information for our understanding and analysis.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1t3ugmx3EvRNjA7uO5-fiOEYkKO8BxDbOW_Sy8yFSQE/edit?usp=sharing

JAINA is growing in achieving its new heights and would love to hear from you if anyone has new ideas and insights that can make an impact in the community and improve lives of others.

On behalf of JAINA Executive Committee, I seek forgiveness if we have hurt anyone knowingly or unknowingly in any ways by action, talk or thoughts. Michhami Dukkadam!

Sincerely,

Mahesh Wadher

Section: Compassion

Section Editor: Jayana Shah

[Of the three basic principles of Jainism – Ahimsa, Anekantvad and Aparigraha – ahimsa is the most well recognized Jain principle in the whole world. At the root of ahimsa is compassion; compassion not just for the fellow human beings but also for the smallest of creatures and plants. In this section, we bring you articles related to compassion and about compassionate activities done by various Jain Centers as well as charitable organizations across the World.]

Jiv Daya for 610 chickens at Luvin Arms Animal Sanctuary

By Shaleen Shah



Shaleen Shah is the co-founder of Luvin Arms Animal Sanctuary, a small but growing farmed animal sanctuary in Erie, Colorado. This unlikely sanctuary founder grew up in India before moving to the United States for High School and by the age of 16 had launched his first business, starting his lifelong career as an entrepreneur. Since its unexpected founding in 2015, Shaleen and his wife and co-founder Shilpi have grown Luvin Arms substantially, already having saved over 700 animals and welcoming 5,000+ visitors every year. The Sanctuary is ideally located less than an hour from the major cities of Denver, Boulder, and Fort Collins in one of the top ten ranching states in the country. Shaleen serves as the Executive Director and Board President of Luvin Arms while he balances his full-time job of CEO at his dental financing company, Ajeva. Shaleen and Shilpi live in Boulder with their two boys, Aarav and Avi, and their rescue pup, Blue. He was awarded the Outstanding Jivdaya & Education Award at the JAINA Convention in 2017.

As a young Jain couple, my wife, Shilpi, and I strive to live in alignment with the Jain principles of Ahimsa and Jiv Daya. We founded the Colorado-based nonprofit, Luvin Arms Animal Sanctuary, a 501(c)3 that rescues abused and neglected farmed animals, cares for them, and has education and advocacy programs aimed to eliminate their suffering worldwide.

Since opening in 2015, Luvin Arms has rescued over 700 animals from horrific situations including factory farms, hoarding and neglect cases, slaughterhouse-bound trucks, cockfighting busts, slaughter auctions, and more recently, a bankrupt chicken farm.

We focus on rescuing the species that are the most abused: farmed animals. There are over 9 billion land animals killed for food every year in the United States alone, and about 70 billion worldwide! Animal agriculture is a massive industry that thrives on the exploitation of the most gentle, vulnerable species who have been genetically manipulated to grow rapidly and larger than natural, resulting in chronic issues like arthritis, infections, pain, mobility issues, and premature death.

These animals need us now more than ever.

Luvin Arms is run entirely on donations from individuals and we are currently home to nearly 100 residents including cows, pigs, turkeys, chickens, goats, sheep, ducks, and horses, all of whom are cared for with high quality medical care, nutrition, and individualized attention to ensure their highest wellbeing. We strive to be a shining example of Ahimsa in practice.



Earlier this year, we led our largest rescue to date, saving hundreds of chickens from a bankrupt farm. It was the worst possible conditions that you could imagine. Thousands upon thousands of suffering birds were crammed in filthy, ammonia-filled barns. Corpses and dismembered body parts in various states of decay littered the floor. Dying chickens were covered in feces and unable to stand up, drowning in their own filth. Starving birds were forced into cannibalism to survive. It was absolutely horrifying.

As we were saving birds on one side of the barn, farm workers were ripping the heads off of chickens on the other.

After six rescue trips, a total of 610 birds were saved. Survivors suffered from bacterial infections, parasites, respiratory and eye infections, compound fractures, frostbite, septic arthritis, dehydration, and emaciation.

We had no room for them when we said yes. A volunteer team retrofitted one of our older storage barns and rushed to predator-proof the space. Our Visitor Center was quickly emptied and turned into an intensive care unit for those in the most critical condition, where they remained for months until they were healthy enough to be transported to their forever homes. With no capacity to keep all of the chickens ourselves, we collaborated with over 80 no-kill homes across 31 states to provide sanctuary.

You can view the video of this rescue operation at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oeb9yygg6M>

Luvin Arms kept a flock of special-needs birds, including one girl, Lucine, with an amputated wing. Lucine is a huge sweetheart and loves attention. She has been through so much abuse, it's heartwarming to see this gentle individual learn to trust again.

Lucine isn't the only one with a personality. Every chicken has her own likes, dislikes, preferences, and personality traits. Gracie (shown below) had a severe respiratory infection, a heavy parasite load, and was weak, emaciated, and dehydrated when she was rescued. Gracie the hen made a full recovery and is living her life in peace at Luvin Arms.

She is bold and inquisitive, and always escapes her pen to explore every nook and cranny in the care unit.

Wendy is friendly, following caregivers as they provide treatment. Wendy is best friends with Valentine, a small but mighty hen who loves snuggling with both Wendy and our caregivers.



Blaze, a special-needs chicken, has help walking with a custom-made wheelchair.



The impact for this rescue doesn't end here. When people meet a chicken like Lucine or Wendy who has a name, is well cared for, and has her own personality and preferences, they start to see her as an individual – an individual who is worthy of life and compassion. Many people change their lifestyles to be more in line with the Jain principle of Ahimsa and Karuna and go pure vegetarian. One vegetarian alone spares up to 100 lives per year.



LuvIn Arms Care team gives medication to sick birds.

All across the country, these birds will meet tens of thousands – possibly even hundreds of thousands – of people over the next 8+ years. This will make an incredible impact, sparing the lives of hundreds of thousands of animals.

At LuvIn Arms Animal Sanctuary, we primarily focus on education and outreach to expand our impact beyond sanctuary boundaries. We host education and outreach events like empathy workshops for kids, documentary screenings, cooking demos, health and environmental presentations, and most impactful, onsite tours for which we welcomed over 5,000 visitors last year.

Costs for this rescue added up quickly, putting a huge toll on the Sanctuary's resources. The endeavor cost over \$60,000 between vet bills, medication, transport, rescue, staffing, food, and shelter and we relied entirely on generous and dedicated donors to cover all expenses.

As devoted Jains, it is our duty to extend our circle of compassion to all animals. That is what inspires us to do this tireless work of Jiv Daya day after day.

To get a closer look at the amazing work LuvIn Arms is doing, watch this overview video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LCsa-xczKA>

To support our lifesaving work and help to continue to spread the messages of Ahimsa, Karuna, and Jiv Daya to animals, please visit our website at www.LuvInArms.org/Jain.

To provide your comments about this article or share your experience in practicing compassion, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

7 Practices to Cultivate Compassion

by [Leo Babauta](#) (Syndicated from [zenhabits.net](#), Aug 02, 2011. Quotes added to pictures taken from [pixabay.com](#))

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”
- Dalai Lama

I believe compassion to be one of the few things we can practice that will bring immediate and long-term happiness to our lives. I'm not talking about the short-term gratification of pleasures of the material world, but something that will bring true and lasting happiness. The kind that sticks.

The key to developing compassion in your life is to make it a daily practice. Meditate upon it in the morning (you can do it while checking email), think about it when you interact with others, and reflect on it at night. In this way, it becomes a part of your life. Or as the Dalai Lama also said, “This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.”

Definition

Let's use the Wikipedia definition of Compassion:



Compassion is an emotion that is a sense of shared suffering, most often combined with a desire to alleviate or reduce the suffering of another; to show special kindness to those who suffer. Compassion essentially arises through empathy, and is often characterized through actions, wherein a person acting with compassion will seek to aid those they feel compassionate for.

Compassionate acts are generally considered those which take into account the suffering of others and attempt to alleviate that suffering as if it were one's own. In this sense, the various forms of the Golden Rule are clearly based on the concept of compassion.

Compassion differs from other forms of helpful or humane behavior in that its focus is primarily on the alleviation of suffering.

Benefits

Why develop compassion in your life? Well, there are scientific studies that suggest there are physical benefits to practicing compassion — people who practice it produce 100 percent more DHEA, which is a hormone that counteracts the aging process, and 23 percent less cortisol — the “stress hormone.”

But there are other benefits as well, and these are emotional and spiritual. The main benefit is that it helps you to be more happy, and brings others around you to be more happy. If we agree that it is a common aim of each of us to strive to be happy, then compassion is one of the main tools for achieving that happiness. It is therefore of utmost importance that we cultivate compassion in our lives and practice compassion every day.

How do we do that? This guide contains 7 different practices that you can try out and perhaps incorporate into your everyday life.

7 Compassion Practices

1. **Morning ritual.** Greet each morning with a ritual. Try this one, suggested by the Dalai Lama: “Today I am fortunate to have woken up, I am alive, I have a precious human life, I am not going to waste it. I am going to use all my energies

to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, I am going to have kind thoughts towards others, I am not going to get angry or think badly about others, I am going to benefit others as much as I can.” Then, when you’ve done this, try one of the practices below.

2. **Empathy Practice.** The first step in cultivating compassion is to develop empathy for your fellow human beings.



Many of us believe that we have empathy, and on some level nearly all of us do. But many times we are centered on ourselves (I’m no exception) and we let our sense of empathy get rusty. Try this practice: Imagine that a loved one is suffering. Something terrible has happened to him or her. Now try to imagine the pain they are going through. Imagine the suffering in as much detail as possible. After doing this practice for a couple of weeks, you should try moving on to imagining the suffering of others you know, not just those who are close to you.

3. **Commonalities practice.** Instead of recognizing the differences between yourself and others, try to recognize what you have in common. At the root of it all, we are all human beings. We need food, and shelter, and love. We crave attention, and recognition, and affection, and above all, happiness. Reflect on these commonalities you have with every other human being, and ignore the differences. One of my favorite exercises comes from a great article from Ode Magazine — it’s a five-step exercise to try when you meet friends and strangers. Do it discreetly and try to do all the steps with the same person. With your attention geared to the other person, tell yourself:

Step 1: “Just like me, this person is seeking happiness in his/her life.”

Step 2: “Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life.”

Step 3: “Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair.”

Step 4: "Just like me, this person is seeking to fill his/her needs."

Step 5: "Just like me, this person is learning about life."

4. **Relief of suffering practice.** Once you can empathize with another person, and understand his humanity and suffering, the next step is to want that person to be free from suffering. This is the heart of compassion — actually the definition of it. Try this exercise: Imagine the suffering of a human being you've met recently. Now imagine that you are the one going through that suffering. Reflect on how much you would like that suffering to end. Reflect on how happy you would be if another human being desired your suffering to end, and acted upon it. Open your heart to that human being and if you feel even a little that you'd want their suffering to end, reflect on that feeling. That's the feeling that you want to develop. With constant practice, that feeling can be grown and nurtured.
5. **Act of kindness practice.** Now that you've gotten good at the 4th practice, take the exercise a step further. Imagine again the suffering of someone you know or met recently. Imagine again that you are that person, and are going through that suffering. Now imagine that another human being would like your suffering to end — perhaps your mother or another loved one. What would you like for that person to do to end your suffering? Now reverse roles: you are the person who desires for the other person's suffering to end. Imagine that you do something to help ease the suffering, or end it completely. Once you get good at this stage, practice doing something small each day to help end the suffering of others, even in a tiny way. Even a smile, or a kind word, or doing an errand or chore, or just talking about a problem with another person. Practice doing something kind to help ease the suffering of others. When you are good at this, find a way to make it a daily practice, and eventually a throughout-the-day practice.



6. **Those who mistreat us practice.** The final stage in these compassion practices is to not only want to ease the suffering of those we love and meet, but even those who mistreat us. When we encounter someone who mistreats us, instead of acting in anger, withdraw. Later, when you are calm and more detached, reflect on that person who mistreated you. Try to imagine the background of that person. Try to imagine what that person was taught as a child. Try to imagine the day or week that person was going through, and what kind of bad things had happened to that person. Try to imagine the mood and state of mind that person was in — the suffering that person must have been going through to mistreat you that way. And understand that their action was not about you, but about what they were going through. Now think some more about the suffering of that poor person, and see if you can imagine trying to stop the suffering of that person. And then reflect that if you mistreated someone, and they acted with kindness and compassion toward you, whether that would make you less likely to mistreat that person the next time, and more likely to be kind to that person. Once you have mastered this practice of reflection, try acting with compassion and understanding the next time a person treats you. Do it in little doses, until you are good at it. Practice makes perfect.
7. **Evening routine.** I highly recommend that you take a few minutes before you go to bed to reflect upon your day.



Think about the people you met and talked to, and how you treated each other. Think about your goal that you stated this morning, to act with compassion towards others. How well did you do? What could you do better? What did you learn from your experiences today? And if you have time, try one of the above practices and exercises.

These compassionate practices can be done anywhere, any time. At work, at home, on the road, while traveling, while at a store, while at the home of a friend or family member. By sandwiching your day with a morning and evening ritual, you can frame your day properly, in an attitude of trying to practice compassion and develop it within yourself. And with practice, you can begin to do it throughout the day, and throughout your lifetime.

This, above all, will bring happiness to your life and to those around you.

“My message is the practice of compassion, love and kindness. These things are very useful in our daily life, and also for the whole of human society these practices can be very important.” - Dalai Lama



Leo Babauta is an author, blog writer. He lives in Davis, California. Zen Habits is a blog written by Leo about implementing zen habits in daily life. It offers suggestions for how to live, and also includes frequent references to how Leo has implemented these habits. He covers topics such as simplifying, living frugally, parenting, happiness, motivation, eliminating debt, saving, eating healthily and successfully implementing good habits.

To provide your comments about this article or share your experience in practicing compassion, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

Section: Devotion

Section Editor: Dr. Pravin L Shah

[In this section, we will have articles about the various forms in which we express our reverence, love and gratitude for God. Prayers, Puja, Darshan, Stavan, and Sutra are all part of a daily life of an aspirant. Understanding the purpose and meaning of these daily rites is crucial in order to develop faith and make our practices full of devotion and sentiment. Our goal for this section of the magazine is to provide articles that explain the meanings of various pujas, stavans, sutras and other rituals. In addition, we plan to include information about past and present Jain Acharyas.]

Acharya Kundkund's Life and Teachings

By Dr. Pravin L Shah

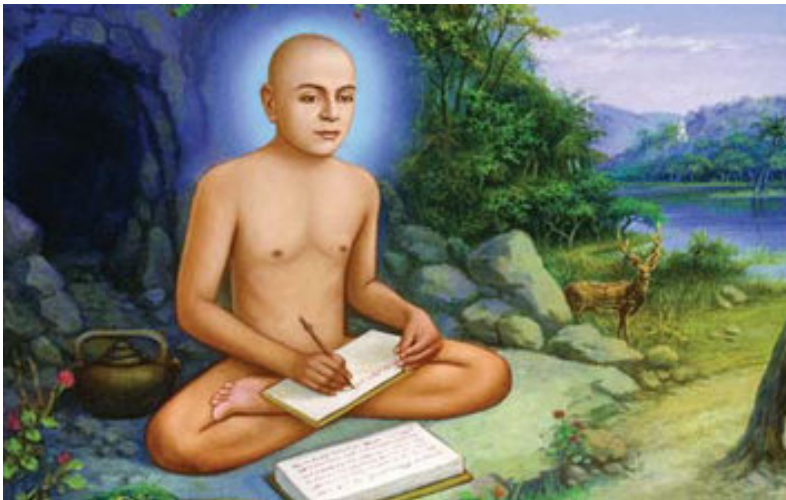
Acharya Kundkund (112 B.C.) is an unquestioned authority on Jain metaphysics, and his name is revered and enumerated next only to that of Lord Mahavir and Gautam Swamiji. Acharya's original name was Padmnanadi, which was then changed to Kundkund, possibly due to his native place Kondkunda in south India. His father's name was Guna Kirti, and his mother's name was Shital Devi. Shital Devi was very spiritual and learned in Jain philosophy and used to sing this song while she was pregnant with her future child: "Suddhoshi Buddhoshi, Niranjnoshi, Sanasar Maya Parivarjitoshi", which means you are pure consciousness and pure bliss and detached from the worldly objects.

When child Padmanadi was 10, he used to listen to the teachings of his mother and monks and showed deep desire to renounce the world. He kept on asking his parents to give him permission to take Digambar Jain diksha and after repeated and firm requests; his parents gave him the permission. At age 11, Padmananadi took the diksha and according to Dr. A. N Upadhyay's biography of Kunkund, Padmanandi was a disciple of Pujya Bhadrabahu Swami who was the last Shurt-kevali (one who has known by heart all the Agam texts and fourteen Purvas) followed by Sudharma Swami and Jambu Swami who were Lord Mahavir's Gandharas and attained Keval-Gnan and Moksha.

Because of his deep interest and dedication to Jain Agams, Padmanandi learned all the Agam texts and 14 Purvas from his Sadguru Bhadrabahu Swami at young age, and spent many years in the mountains and caves in silent meditation to contemplate Self, and experienced divine enlightenment at young age. His name was changed to Kundkund and was appointed as an Acharya Kundkund at age 44, leading many Digambar monks of high esteem.

From age 30 to age 85 Acharya Kundkund received many honors and praise from all over India and was called as "Kalikal-Sarvgn". Due to his exceptional spiritual practice and living in caves to meditate for days and years on the nature of true Self, Acharya Kundkund attained 64 supernatural yogic powers including "Charan-Vidya" which means he could fly in the air and visit any destination. Since his Sadguru Bhadrabahu Swami was no longer living, Acharya Kundkund decided to meet Shri Simandhar Swami, Tirthankara in Mahavideha, at age 86 to get right answers on the metaphysics of Agams and Purvas.

According to many written Shilalekhs (words inscribed on mountain rocks), Acharya Kundkund flew using his divine yogic powers to meet Lord Simandhar Swami and stayed there in Mahavideha for full eight days. Every day he listened to all four Deshnans (2.5 hour long 4 talks daily) of Simandhar Swami, and then he spent rest of his time daily with many Shrut-kevlis there to get the right answers on Jain metaphysics. He then returned to south India and composed 84 Prabhruts until his final Samadhi day at age 96. Out of his 84 compositions, less than ten texts are available today and following are some of his most widely studied texts in Digambar Jain following.



Acharya Kundkund's contributions to Jain literature and philosophy are unsurpassed in last 2000 years. Most authoritative and prominent of Kundkunds' epics are: (1) Samaysar (2) Pravachansar (3) Panchastikay (4) Niyamsar (5) Ashta-prabhrut (6) Twelve Bhavnas and (7) Bhakti-Sangraha which includes Siddha-Bhakti, Arihant Bhakti, Guru Bhakti, Pravachan Bhakti, Shastra-Bhakti etc.

Samaysar is a paramount work of Acharya Kundkund composed in Prakrit more than 2000 years ago at age 85. Acharya Amrutchandra has brilliantly commented Samaysar in Sanskrit in the 10th century A.D who is also considered as one of

the greatest Jain Masters and scholars of Sanskrit and the metaphysics of soul and matter. Acharya Jaysen also commented in Sanskrit on Samaysar in 12th century A.D. Banarasidasji did a Hindi poetic translation of Samaysar's Sanskrit verses of Amrutchandra five hundred years ago. Hindi and Gujarati and English translations of the entire text are now available. Samaysar provides detailed account on how to develop Samyak Darshan or Right Faith and it has been beautifully described in 415 verses. A wonderful Gujarati translation made by Pandit Himatlal Shah of Songudh Ashram is available.

Pravachansar is a text by Kundkund with 275 verses and it focuses primarily on how to attain Samyak Gyan. It has also been commented in detail by Acharya Amrutchandra and translated in Gujarati by Pantit Himatlal Shah. **Niyamsar** text by Kundkund deals with Samyak Charitra and has 187 verses. **Panchastikay** text deals with five elements in great depth to describe the role of Jiva, Ajiva, Dharmastikya, Adharmastikay, Space and Time. **Ashtapahud** text elaborates the importance of Samyak Darshan and emphasizes that all the spiritual knowledge and conduct does not provide the liberation of soul until the Right Faith or Samyak Darshan is attained. The text **Bhakti-Sangrha** beautifully describes the importance of devotion, and depth of 12 Agam texts and 14 Purvas. All these texts are truly epic compositions to study to understand genuine path to attain Samyak Gyan, Samyak Darshan, and Samyak Charitra.

Out of the twelve Agam Sutras composed by Gautam Swami, the last Agam text called *Drashtivad* is no longer in existence, which contained fourteen *Purvas*. Fortunately, the scholarly works of Acharya Kundkund have given us the essence of some of the *Purvas* that contained the depth of real Jain metaphysics or Dravyanuyog. Following is a brief summary of Acharya Kundkund's teachings.

- True nature of Self from *Dravyarthic* point of view is pure consciousness, always in the state of knowing.
- The most important scientific characteristic of soul or *Atman* is its intrinsic property of self-illumination as well as illuminating the entire universe constantly. Each soul is everlasting, ever existing, self-illuminating, and filled with infinite knowledge, perception, and eternal bliss and happiness.
- One needs to consider three aspects of soul: 1) Soul as a *Dravya* is never changing and is everlasting and always in state of knowing. 2) Soul has infinite *Gunas* or attributes like infinite - knowledge, perception, bliss, joy etc. and 3) Soul as *Paryay* is in transient state undergoing changes all the time. This is a very brilliant attribute of Jain Syadvad that describes all entities in relative way and is unique only to Jainism.
- The Karmic impurity resides in the *Paryaya* of the soul but does not enter inside the *Dravya* or pure consciousness. **According to Jain science, our soul as a *Dravya* is as pure with same qualities as that of Lord Mahavira.** For example, a gold ring may have some impurity mixed with it but gold as a *Dravya* is absolutely pure gold in the eye of the jeweler all the time.
- From the absolute point of view or *Nischaya Naya*, the Karmic matter does not touch pure consciousness nor does the soul gives up its purity in any life cycle. The Karmic matter and the various transformations are experienced only in the *Paryaya* or transient state. The root cause of the Karmic bondage is the ignorance of the Self or Mithyatva. All worldly souls are pure consciousness but the *Paryaya* has a veil of Mithyatva or Self-ignorance. The ignorance about Self can be destroyed fully by illuminating the soul with right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct as described in detail by Acharya Kundkund in these texts.

Acharya Kundkund's teachings have impacted thousand of seekers of truth worldwide. His impact was very strong on Shrimad Rajchandra as seen from his text *Vachanamrut* with numerous references of Samaysar and Pravchansar texts. Gurudev Kanji Swami of Songudh dedicated his entire life to understand and narrate discourses on Samaysar and other texts repeatedly 19 times, and all his talks are compiled in their website: www.atmadharma.com. Last but not least, Dr. Hukamchand Bharil of Jaipur has also dedicated his life in teaching the essence of Samaysar, and many Jain centers in US have benefited hugely from his discourses.



Pravin L. Shah is a scientist in the field of Newtonian Physics. He has studied Jain Agam texts and classic texts of Acharya Kundkund, Haribhadra, Upadhyay Yashovijayji, Anandghanji, and Shrimad Rajchandra in great depth over the last forty years. He is fluent in Sanskrit and Prakrit, and he has conducted Parushna programs and spiritual discourses for over three decades. He has published a groundbreaking book entitled, "Atmasadhana na Amrut Anusthan" which was released in July 2017 Jaina convention in N.J. He lives in Reading PA and his email is: pshahusa@yahoo.com

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

Param Pujya Shrimad Acharya Udayvallabh Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb

By Disciples of Acharya Udayvallabh Surishwarji

Param Pujya Shrimad Acharya Udayvallabh Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb is a perfect personification of simplicity, selflessness, compassion, hard work. He is best known as a pioneer of Perfecting Youth Sessions, a series of seminars on diverse topics aimed at the personal and spiritual development of the youth. On February 18, 2019 India Book of Records awarded him for Maximum Seminars on different topics by an individual through 'Perfecting Youth Sessions'; widely known as PYS. First PYS session was held in September 2010. The 112th session in this series will be held in Ahmedabad on 24th November 2019. Let us look at the background of this remarkable Acharyashriji who is considered as a leading light of Jain Shraman Sanstha.



Pujya Maharaj Saheb was born in Mumbai in December 1967 and was named Vikas. The family hails from Bhavnagar in Gujarat, but had settled in Mumbai. His father is Mahendrabhai, mother is Neeruben and he has a younger brother named Ashish, born in September 1971.

Vikas was very bright in studies as well as in sports and always topped in his class. He studied up to 9th grade in an English Medium School in Sion, Mumbai. He was very extrovert and active since childhood. He was not inclined towards religion in early childhood. However, his mother, Neeruben, taught her sons the importance of following rituals such as Puja. (*Watch the video titled "This is how my mother cultivated me"* <https://youtu.be/y404tmtrQIQ>)

While working in the kitchen, Neeruben also taught religious sutras to both the brothers. Both brothers stood first and second in the "Atichar-Ratnakar Pacchisi" examination conducted for Mumbai area. In one of Paryushan Parva, both the brothers recited "Atichar-Ajitshanti" *Path* and the Sion Sangh awarded them the title of "Sangh Ratna".

Pujya Maharaj Saheb was gifted with an extra ordinary oratory skill. Once he participated in an interschool elocution competition on Gandhiji at Mani Bhuvan in Mumbai and was awarded first prize. In some other competition he was awarded third prize at the same venue. In another competition held at Ramkrishna Mission in Khar (a Suburb of Mumbai) on Vivekanand, he was awarded second prize. In another

competition at the same venue he was awarded third prize.

In the year 1980, the family came in contact with Param Pujya Acharya Shrimad Jagvallabhsurishwarji Maharaj Saheb and the entire family was deeply engrossed and attracted to Dharma. With deeper understanding of need to lead a pure life free from worries and realizing the importance of *Sanyam Jeevan*, he was drawn towards the idea of *diksha*.

He expressed his desire before the family in 1983 to embrace *diksha*. The family welcomed and gave their consent. He was given *diksha* as well as *vadi diksha* by Param Pujya Gachhadhipati Acharya Shri Bhuvanbhanu Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb. Along with him, his younger brother Ashish also took *diksha* and was named Muni Hridayvallabh Maharaj Saheb.

Incidentally, his father Shri Mahendrabhai also took *diksha* and was named Muniraj Meghvallabhvijayji Maharaj Saheb. His mother Smt. Neeruben also embraced *diksha* and was named Sadhvi Nirvanprabha Shree ji.

After *diksha*, he studied various Jain *Shastras*, *Aagams*, *Tarkshastras*, *Shad-darshan*, etc. Along with these, he also studied the Indian Constitution, the Trust Act, the Indian Penal Code and various other laws. He also appraised himself with various legal cases concerning Jeevdaya, Jain Teerthas etc. All these studies were done by both the brothers together and they have been keeping themselves updated on all these issues. In fact, they are now providing guidance to lawyers and other leading shravakas on several issues! Apart from leading their life for emancipation of their soul as a Jain Sadhu, they have been participating in various other *Shasan* related activities.

After doing swadhyay continuously for fourteen years since taking diksha, Pujya Maharaj Saheb accepted the responsibility of giving sermon (deshna) in the year 1997 and presently he is hailed as an excellent deshnakar. He has mastered the art of presenting the knowledge contained in Aagams and shastras in a manner in tune with the present day contexts and in a very simple style which can appeal to each and every person. He is also a master in giving perfectly satisfactory answers to the queries from his audience.

Realizing that there is need to target young minds to mould them towards dharma, he started conducting Perfecting Youth Session in 2010. The participants in these sessions are young boys and girls in age group of 15 to 30 years. The sessions have a non-stop duration of three hours. More than 2500 youths participate in these sessions and many travel from various cities to wherever Pujya Maharaj Saheb is residing. Till date more than 300,000 youths have participated in 111 sessions.

The youth audience include doctors, MBAs, CAs, Engineers, Lawyers, Entrepreneurs, who attend and get inspired by these sessions, are applying the learnings not only in their personal lives but also in their professional lives as well. These sessions are not limited by any religion or caste, and all youth are welcomed. Importantly they inspire discourse among the members of the community who have been drawn to theological complexity as much as they have been to the technology and the rich and lavish lifestyles.

Despite venturing out into so many other activities which are normally not a part of a Jain Sadhu's normal life and rituals, Pujya Maharaj Saheb is also very particular about observing the laid down rituals of a Jain Sadhu.

Not only he himself has studied, he has also taught Sanskrit, Nyayshastra, Tarkshastra, Aagams, Kavya etc. to other Sadhu Bhagwantas. Besides studies, Sadhu Seva or Vaiyyavach is very close to his heart. As far as *Tapascharya* is concerned, for the first 17 to 18 years after diksha he did *Ekashna*. He performed *Dharmachakra Tap*, *Siddhi Tap* twice, 45 *Olis of Vardhman Tap* and 8 to 11 fasts several times. Even today, in his daily food he consumes very limited dravyas.

He has 26 disciples of his own so far.

Along with being an extraordinary orator, he has been very fluent with pen also and has written fifteen books so far on subjects like Parenting, Positivity, Happiness, *Namuthanam*, a commentary on *Shakrastav*, the Lure of stock market, Bal Diksha etc.

In a program launched by Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi, titled "Vanche Gujarat" (Gujarat Reads), two of his books titled 'Gharshala' (on the subject of parenting) and 'Shikshan Ni Sonography' (a critical study on current education system) have been selected as recommended books.



He has written a commentary in the year 1996 on "*Jain Tarkbhasha*" by Upadhyay Shri Yashovijayji Maharaj Saheb in Sanskrit consisting of approximately 6000 shlokhas, drawing references from 140 different granthas. He writes the foreword regularly for the Sanskrit Magazine titled "Setu Bandh". Besides these, he himself has written almost 300 stutis, of which "Aajthi Mara Tame" and "Kesariyo Rang" are very famous.

He has trained several youths as capable anchors to conduct religious – diksha – shibir and such other programs. He has inspired many to become good devotional singers and musicians. He has actively contributed in writing the scripts of many cultural dramas and has diverted thousands of youths towards socio-religious activities. Various sanghas have received his guidance in activities such as *sadharmik bhakti*, *sadharan khatu*, *pathshala*, *pathshala* teachers etc.

He has been instrumental in creating very huge upashrayas at about ten places in the cities of Mumbai, Surat, Ahmedabad etc.

After being awarded the *padvi* of Acharya in December, 2016 (both the brothers and father were designated Acharyas at the same time), he is doing the Suri mantra jap everyday and has so far done five suri mantra pithika totaling 84 days during which he has kept no connection with any outsider, observed total maun.

In spite of his very busy schedule, he is easily approachable for everyone; from a young child aged 4 to 5 years to very old persons. He leaves a lasting impression in the minds of all the people who meet him.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

Section: Education

Section Editor: Dilip Parekh

[The purpose of this section is twofold. One is to provide information about Pathshala education across North America related to innovative ways of teaching and getting students engaged in learning about Jain Religion. The second is to provide well researched articles about Jain values, principles and philosophy; similar to the articles we had published in past few issues of Jain Digest.]

Madhu Bindu (Drop of Honey) and the Samsara

By Dr. Sulekh C. Jain

In many Jain temples in India, I used to see the following beautiful picture titled **Madhu Bindu** (drop of honey). I found this picture very powerful and fascinating in so many ways.



Very clearly, this picture depicts the *samsara* and the drama of human life. If you look at it carefully, you will see a man hanging from the branch of a tree (representing life and life span). There are two mice (white and black representing day and night) shown here busy and slowly cutting or chipping away the same branch of the tree. In addition, there is also shown a powerful elephant (representing serious illness) trying to shake or uproot the same entire tree.

Down below, under the feet of the hanging man, is a deep well full of poisonous snakes. This represents death. On top of the man's head there is a beehive of honey (*madhu*) representing momentary pleasures and material attractions of life. The man is looking up and eagerly waiting for the next drop of honey to fall in his mouth which he is enjoying it very much.

Right above all this, there is a holy/enlightened spiritual gurus going in a viman (flying vehicle) and is calling out the hanging man and telling him about the futility of all the material attractions and the real and imminent dangers he is facing. The guru is asking the man to hurry up to catch his viman and come on board (to be saved from potential but guaranteed misery and death) but the man says, "guru ji please wait for a few more moments till I get one more drop of honey and then next and next (*murchha* , unlimited greed and parigraha)".

Finally, the game is over. The mice have done their job or the elephant has shaken and uprooted the tree and eventually the man falls in the well, eaten up by the eagerly waiting hungry snakes and thus the existence of the man in that yoni (station of life) ends.

My brothers and sisters, this is *samsara* and the play/drama of the journey of life (birth and death) which all of us have been going through ever since, again and again and unlimited number of times.

The Gujarati composition by Shrimad Rajchandra below tells us the importance of our human life:

*Bahu punya kera punj thi shubh deh manav no malyo,
Toye arey! bhavchakra no aanto nahi ekke talyo;
Sukh prapt karata sukh tale chhe lesh e lakshe laho,
Kshan Kshan bhayankar bhav marane kan aho raachi raho?*

*It is because of lots of good karmas, that (you) have got this good human body
Even then (you) have not been able to reduce even one cycle of birth and death
(You) need to realize that when (you) get material happiness, the real eternal happiness moves farther away
Why are (you) so relaxed and unconcerned while dying every second a spiritual death?*

We need to realize how fortunate we are to have this human life, get out of our slumber and strive for the eternal happiness

Recently I was flying from Las Vegas to Atlanta. When deplaning in Atlanta, I asked the person who was sitting next to me during the flight, if he lives in Atlanta. He replied, "I don't live here, am just passing thru". Then he further said that he was going to Boston. For a very long time I kept on reflecting on his answer "***I don't live here, am just passing thru***". We all are here on this earth for a very short time. We all are travelers and are constantly on travels. Those who believe in re-birth, we all have been doing this constantly ever since, passing from one life form to another. This present life form is just our temporary abode, not permanent.

We don't live here; we all are just passing thru, what a great truth and thought! We all have Entrance (birth) and Exit (death). If there is an entrance, then the exit is a MUST; we cannot avoid it, no one ever has.

Most of us get lost in this worldly ***maya*** (mirage) or optical illusion of our being here. We think, we are made of steel, are immortal and are here forever. Exit is for others and not for me. But this life is an illusion. During this short stay in this world, we all create our own music and play our own drums or orchestra. As we exit from here, all that music stops and soon will be completely forgotten

Bhagwan Mahavir said to his chief Disciple Gautama Swami:

"Human life is like a dew drop on a blade of grass and with wind and sun, it disappears any moment. O Gautama be aware and careful all the time"

"As the nights depart, the pale leaves of a tree also fall. In the same way the day of man's life also departs. O Gautama have no remission even for a moment"

I am sure we all know this eternal truth about the fleeting life, but still are mired in accumulating more and more wealth / another drop of madhu Bindu (way way beyond our needs for food, clothing and shelter), fulfilling sky-high wish and wants (for power, prestige and ego) and all kinds of desires and wants without any **brakes**. Many a times nothing is enough and we want more and more. In this unstoppable race (some call it rat race or mad race),

Main sapne sajaa rahaa thaa, yuv-van nikal gayaa; Ankh khulee dekhaa to Jeevan nikal gayaa

(I lost my youth engrossed in dreaming and woke up to find that life had passed me by).

Let us reflect daily and have a dialog of the self with the self. Let us reflect and work to lead a life free of passions (of greed, ego, anger, deceit and hatred) and instead the life full of ahimsa (nonviolence) towards all, love, compassion, care, support and mutual respect. This way, we always will be ready for the final exit/check out which will happen but don't know when, where and how. Such a checkout will be with a smile and without enmity, grudge and hatred and fear.

*Insaan kaa eh jisam kiyaa hai, Jis pe shaidaa hai jahaan
Ek mittee kee imaat, Ek mittee kaa makaan
Khoon kaa garaa lagaa, Aur eenten is main haddiyaan
Chund saason pe kharaa hai, Eh khayaali asmaan
Mot kee purzor Aandhi, Is sey jub takraaye gee
Dekh lenaa yeh imaat, Toot kar gir jaye gee*

(This human body to which we are so enamored, is a building made up of the 5 elements; earth, water, fire, air and space. Here bones are the bricks and the blood is the mortar. This imaginary building is supported and sustained by a few breaths. The terrible cyclone of death when strikes this building, it topples instantly and gets detonated)



Sulekh Jain, Ph.D. is the Past Secretary and President of the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA). He also authored a book "**An Ahimsa Crisis: You Decide**, which can be accessed as an eBook free of charge at www.isjs.in. For further information, please contact Sulekh via email: scjain@earthlink.net

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

Calligraphy as a Meditative Medium

By Minaxi Choksi

Calligraphy means the art of beautiful handwriting. In this day and age of digital printing and instant gratification of perfect lettering, one would think why Calligraphy is in its revival age? Initially, JAINA 2019 Convention Board members were little apprehensive in approving this program but in their Motto of giving this JAINA Convention a face lift they were very receptive to introducing a new trend in Art form which is deeply rooted from our centuries old tradition of handwritten manuscripts. Our Kalpasutra pages preserved in Victoria & Albert Museum and British Museums are perfect examples of *Devanagari* Calligraphy.



So what is it that in this art which made tech Gurus like Steve Jobs get self-absorbed in Calligraphy so seriously? What's the missing factor in print-works that has made the Maker Movement and created such resurgence in handwriting? What have the psychologists, analysts, scribes, scholars, philosophers and Spiritual Gurus concluded?

It's the missing human element! Calligraphy helps in Engaging the Human Mind with Core Cognitive skills. Tibetan Buddhist monks have used this medium for meditation for the longest time and so have medieval monks when scripting manuscripts by hand. In today's era, even typing isn't fast enough - we have come full circle from hieroglyphs to emojis. Calligraphy is the antidote: it helps to set back from the fast paced to the present time by articulating one letter at a time with the aesthetics of deeply rooted cultural history. You can feel the Zen through your whole body and feel the brain recharged with vitality



This single medium has bridged all generational gaps with this new sense of revitalization. As our grandparents would say, "this is nothing new, we used dip pens and ink from our days". Young parents whose kids don't have exposure to cursive writing in schools are realizing the missing link and are playing a proactive role in the importance of good

penmanship. Even the baby boomers are in search of Zen, with ample time on hand in retirement! With this extensive demand the pen manufacturers have come up with better introductory tools to make the experience easier, for first time users.

As the session registration for the JAINA Convention began, the conveners were really surprised at the storm of Calligraphy Workshop enrollment registrations and appeals. The workshop with a capacity of 30 was filled in four days! This put their doubts to rest and immediately agreed to offer extra workshops to satisfy the requests. The convention had two fully booked Workshops; which had a feel of a professional studio experience with overhead live display monitor, microphone etc. The participants were in awe holding the brand new calligraphy pens with artist grade papers and indulging into the mystical world of calligraphy.

Here are some of the comments from workshop attendees:

- *I was the first one to enroll because Mina Choksi was offering to share her artistic skills.*
- *I had never tried calligraphy before; didn't realize how engrossing it is.*
- *This class was so fantastic that I did both the sessions.*
- *I'll definitely invest in the tools to continue practicing.*
- *I'm going to use these skills to address the wedding envelopes.*
- *Minaji makes it look so easy but I'm sure she has a lot of experience because it required a lot of concentration.*



Reverend Heng Sure , who teaches Calligraphy came to Bless this Workshop with Nipun Mehta.

I thank everyone who attended or supported this introductory medium at JAINA and set a precedence for the revival of Jain Art.



Minaxi Choksi has majored in Digital Art and Fine Arts in various mediums like Oils, Watercolor, Print, Ceramics, Glass, Metals, Airbrushes, Felting and over 10 years of intensive Calligraphy training from several Masters.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

Section: Information

Section Editor: To be Assigned

[With 75+ Jain Centers in North America and over 100,000 members there is a need to exchange information so that each center can efficiently address the challenges they face. There is a wide variety of topics such as fund raising, attracting younger people to Jain Centers, inviting good speakers and artists, etc. In this section we will publish good, proven practices in these areas. News about recent important events, important timely announcements and articles of general interest will also be included in this section.]

Mahatma Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations

By Anop Vora and Dilip Parekh

During the month of October, Mahatma Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary was celebrated all over the world. The celebrations included Peace Walks, Prayers, Dance-Drama based on the life of Gandhiji, Movies, Exhibits and speeches by prominent leaders calling for peace, harmony and unity.

Here are some interesting videos:

- UN celebrates 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at UN Headquarters
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yjo1TK4obvw>
- India's Prime Minister Modi paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi.
News coverage by CNA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPwhbNVBf6E>
- The Ministry of External Affairs in India got leading singers in 124 countries to sing Gandhiji's favorite bhajan "Vaishnav Jan To". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvWologZHCM>

Here are brief reports of celebrations in Rochester, NY and Los Angeles, CA

Rochester, NY

Mr. Ashwin and Rashmi Shah of Jain Society of Rochester organized the celebration of the 150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi over a span of about a month. It included Gandhi Exhibition, Peace Walk, Interfaith Prayers, Drama of Kasturba's life, screening of Mahatma Gandhi's movie and the inspiring talks by the local leaders on the "Celebration of Mahatma's life. Deepak Maniar, President of the Jain Society of Rochester also put together a special program on Gandhiji during one of the regular Pooja meetings at which time the dialogue between Gandhiji and Shrimad was enacted quite well. Kit Miller, Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute remained an enthusiastic participant in all events.

Arun Gandhi, Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi addressed the 'Peace Walk' organized by the M. K. Gandhi Institute of Non-Violence and the larger Indian Community. He said: "The birth of Gandhiji 150 years ago was the beginning of the era of human sanity, what happened on 9/11 in America was the end of this sanity." He urged the U.S. Government return to the principles of truth and non-violence.



Deepak Maniar, wore Gandhiji Costume at this event, reminding us all about the sacrifice of Gandhiji. Please watch about 1 minute long video from the local news channel:
<https://13wham.com/features/bright-spot/bright-spot-walking-for-peace>

The Gandhi exhibition featured photos, posters, messages and artifacts highlighting important milestones in Mahatma's life, movements and accomplishments during which he steadfastly adhered to the principles of truth, peace and non-violence. The City of Rochester declared Oct. 2 as a day of peace and non-violence. For a midsize town like Rochester, the whole undertaking was quite impressive. Everyone echoed the feeling that the message of Gandhiji is as relevant to-day as it was during the freedom movement.

Los Angeles, CA

The Gandhi Jayanti Celebration in Los Angeles was organized by Jain Center of Southern California (JCSC), Anekant Community Center, Gujarat Society of Southern California and Sanatan Dharma Temple with support from many other local organizations. The celebration was held on September 28th at Jain Center of Southern California in Buena Park, CA.



A couple of hundred people – many dressed in white – gathered on a cloudy Saturday morning at 9:30 to join the Peace Walk, singing “Vaishnav Jan To”, “Raghupati Raghav” and a few patriotic songs. Many people held banner with the name of their organizations showing the unity and peace.

The walk was followed by indoor program in the Jain Center which began with Navkar Mantra, US and Indian National Anthems. After the introductory speeches by JCSC President, Dr. Jasvant Modi and Mrs. Ila Mehta, Gandhi Committee Chair, lamp lighting ceremony took place.

The highlight of the morning program was an amazing talk by Dr. Varun Soni, Dean of Religious Life at University of Southern California. Dr. Sony is a second generation Indian in US and introduced himself as “American Born Confident Desi”! He started the talk by expressing that non-violence is the most important thing the world needs now – including non-violence towards Earth which is facing catastrophic extinction events due to climate change. He talked about his family’s close ties with Gandhiji; both his and his wife’s great grandparents had worked with Gandhiji in India and South Africa.

He passionately talked about the independence movement saying that Gandhiji had a spiritual approach to non-violence. For Gandhiji, the process was as important as the goal. Gandhi taught us about getting to our destination in a particular way and not get blinded by the destination. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Soni said “Gandhi showed us that the way we transform our world is by transforming ourselves. We have to do inner work. To really take Gandhi’s message seriously, we have to start with ourselves. We have to win the battle in our own heart.”

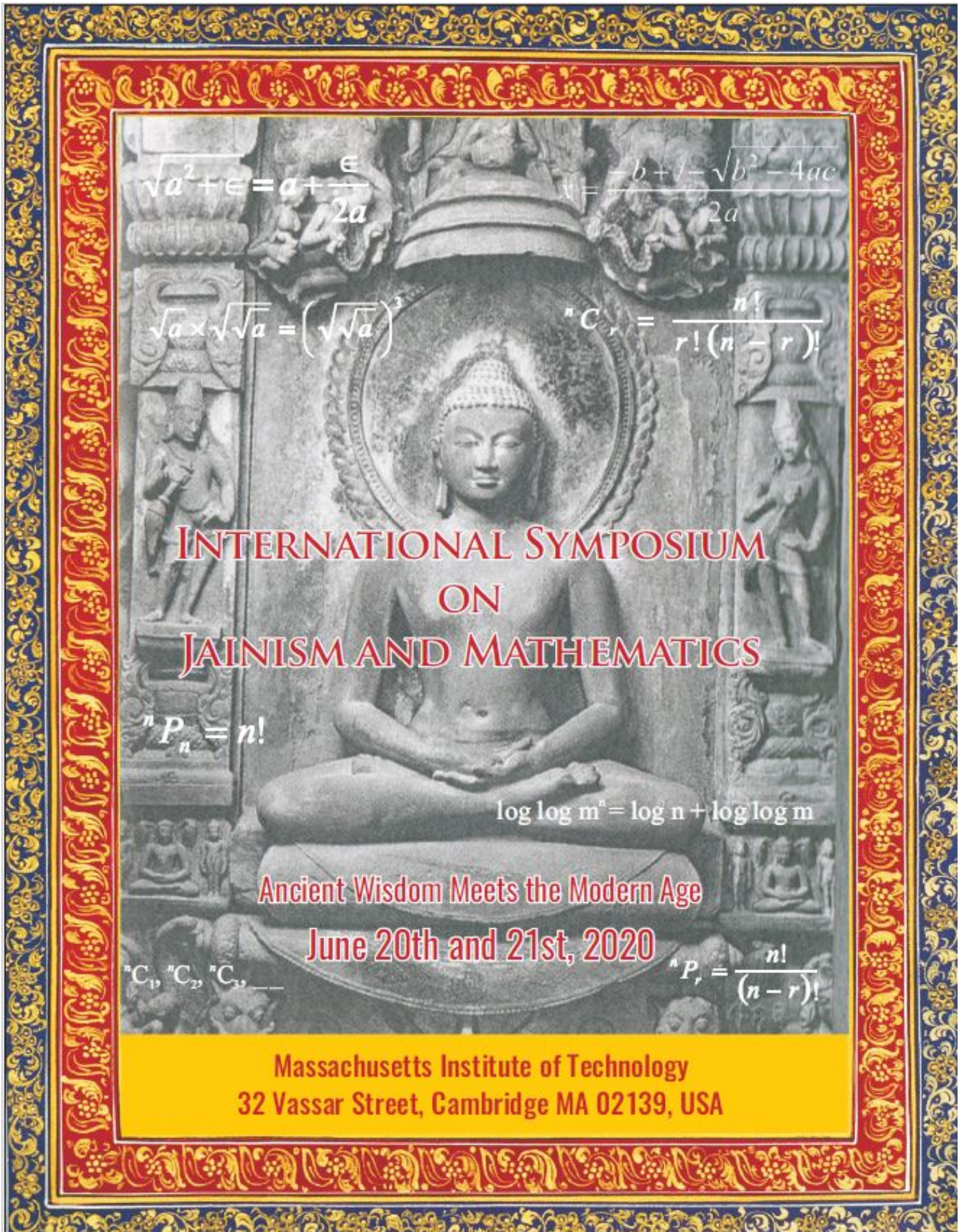
Watch this inspirational talk at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDU9q20UW54>

This was followed by melodious singing of Bhajan and patriotic songs by Arvindbhai Joshi, Ami Mehta. Nauzad of Tarkash Entertainment Inc. also won everyone’s heart by singing a song about Gandhiji that he had composed just that morning!

In the afternoon, an ensemble of 50 dance artists participated in a dance-drama “Ahimsa – Path of Peace” presented by Savithri Arts Academy. This was a creation by Dr. Sinduri Jayasinghe who also choreographed the dances. The wonderful lyrics and expressions by the artists brought to life many events that happened during Gandhiji’s lifespan.

This day long program was moderated by Dr. Gunvant Mehta and Dr. Jayesh Shah. The program concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Nitin Shah.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>



$$\sqrt{a^2 + \epsilon} = a + \frac{\epsilon}{2a}$$

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

$$\sqrt{a} \times \sqrt{a} = (\sqrt{a})^2$$

$${}^nC_r = \frac{n!}{r!(n-r)!}$$

**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
ON
JAINISM AND MATHEMATICS**

$${}^nP_n = n!$$

$$\log \log m^n = \log n + \log \log m$$

Ancient Wisdom Meets the Modern Age

June 20th and 21st, 2020

$${}^nC_1, {}^nC_2, {}^nC_3, \dots$$

$${}^nP_r = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!}$$

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology
32 Vassar Street, Cambridge MA 02139, USA**

SYMPOSIUM ON JAINISM AND MATHEMATICS

Ancient Wisdom Meets the Modern Age

The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JANA) and The Jain Center of Greater Boston (JCGB) will hold an International Symposium on ancient Jain Mathematics on June 20-21, 2020 at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Boston.

Ancient Jain literature (400 BC – 1000 AD) contains advanced mathematical treatises on number theory, set theory, theory of series and sequences, combinatorics, logarithms, trigonometry, as well as the concepts of infinity, and zero. Such mathematical works is not readily evident in the ancient Jain texts, rather it is deeply embedded in small details of Karma theories, the universe (cosmology), and the Jain study of celestial bodies (astronomy).

Over the past century, scholars across the world are only beginning to publish these ancient mathematical discoveries in research papers and books. The Symposium on Jainism and Mathematics to be held at MIT hopes to bring out the distinct features of Jain Mathematics. Moreover, the symposium aims to serve as a catalyst for discussion spanning beyond Jainism to other Eastern and Western faiths, traditions, and their interactions with science and mathematics.

All scholars on Jain mathematics are invited to present their original papers with unpublished research at the symposium at MIT. Selected papers will be edited to produce a monograph on Jainism and Mathematics. Also, prominent mathematicians, scientists, and religious scholars interested in the subject topics will be able to share their views during discussion and question-answer session of the symposium.

Interested scholars are requested to submit their abstracts by 31 st December 2019 at contact@JainMath.org. Please visit www.jainmath.org for more details.

Please note that the sponsors will cover all travel, boarding, and lodging expenses of several selected invited speakers whose selection will be based on their submitted abstracts.

Organizing Committee:

Pankajkumar K Shah, Boston
Dr. Sulekh Jain, Las Vegas
Dr. Manoj Jain, Emory Univ. USA
Dr. Anupam Jain, Indore, India
Dr. Devavrat Shah, MIT, USA

Jain Center of Greater Boston

Hareesh Tamboli, Boston,
President

Welcome and Opening Speech: Dr. Bijoy Misra,
Harvard University, Cambridge, USA

Scientific Organizing Committee

Dr. Catherine Morice-Singh, Paris, France
Dr. Ken Pugh, Yale Univ. USA
Dr. Surender K Jain, Ohio Univ. USA

JAINA

Mahesh Wadher, Los Angeles, President

JAINA-Long Range Planning Committee

JAINA-Academic Liaison Committee

Opening Ceremony: Dr. Vimal Prakash Jain,
Providence, Rhode Island, USA

Section: Inspiration

Section Editor: Reena Shah

[We may learn a lot about the values that Jains believe in by taking part in many educational activities. But the emotion of feeling “inspired” comes from hearing or reading stories that involve people that have focused on these values. It is our surrounding community and the “good” they do for others that compels us to feel inspired. In this section we will feature stories from all over the world - stories that involve people who are helping others, engaging in social entrepreneurship, solving world problems, and living a lifestyle where giving their time and energy to others is their main goal in life.]

The Radical Power of Humility

by [Nipun Mehta](#), Jul 07, 2015

(This is the transcript of an address at the 2015 [Jaina Convention](#) in Atlanta, delivered by Nipun Mehta. Nipun is the founder of [ServiceSpace.org](#), a nonprofit that works at the intersection of gift-economy, technology and volunteerism. You can also view his [other talks](#) online.)

If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are – Mother Teresa



[Below is transcript of a talk, delivered to four thousand people gathered at the National Jain Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to Nipun's talk, civil rights legends [John Lewis](#) and [Andrew Young](#) shared insights from their journey with [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)]

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to all of you. What an honor to be here with all you today, and a special honor to get to follow John Lewis and Andrew Young.

Today I'd like to surface an unpopular virtue. One that's fallen out of favor in a time of selfies and relentless status updates. The virtue of humility. We live in an era that believes it can no longer afford to be humble.

Years ago, I sat down for lunch, next to a young villager in [India](#). As usual, I closed my eyes for a moment of gratitude before eating. As I opened them, I saw the most unusual thing -- this boy was preparing a bite from my plate. My plate! Seeing my confusion, he kindly explained, "I wanted a piece of your prayer, and so I figured the best thing was to be of service to it right now." Saying this, he offered me that bite. Imagine hearing these words, and receiving that gesture from someone you've only just met. I was touched.

Curious to know more about him, I asked him about his work. He smiled and said, "Well, it's hard to describe. It's a bit like the sparrow in that fable. As the story goes, the sky is falling down and all the creatures are fleeing. The sparrow thinks to itself, 'I want to help. But what can I do? I'm just a sparrow.' Then, the sparrow has a flash of brilliance -- it lies on its back

and points its two feet towards the sky. 'What are you doing, Little Sparrow?' others ask. 'Well, I've heard the sky is falling, and so I'm doing my little bit to hold it up.'" After a pause, my new friend adds, "That's what I try to do too."

Small, subtle, silent. And humble. The world we live in is almost the polar opposite -- grandiose, mundane, loud.

A few years ago, Google released a searchable database of 5.2 million books published since 1500. Researchers soon **discovered** that, between 1960 and 2008, individualistic words increasingly overshadowed communal ones. The usage of "kindness" and "helpfulness" dropped by 56%, even as "modesty" and "humbleness" dropped by 52%. Our language reflects our lives. Phrases like "community" and "common good" lost in popularity to "I can do it myself" and "I come first." We moved from **We to Me**.

The archetype of today's hero is a go-getter, with a nice-guys-finish-last mindset. Our systems are designed to privilege power, where respect is calibrated by our titles and bank balances. As business cards lead our handshakes and hugs, our daily lives have morphed into a relay of commercial intentions. In a rat-race to pad our resumes, we've condensed our nuanced experiences into elevator pitches. We're primed to "speak up", and to favor ambition over surrender.

The question is no longer if we can afford our humility, but rather can we really afford our own arrogance?

Without humility, our overblown sense of entitlement disconnects us. It increases narcissism and reduces empathy. That may be good for the economy but certainly not for societal well-being. A couple of months ago I was **in Bhutan** with the folks who implemented Gross National Happiness, and from them I learned about some remarkable **research** at the University of Michigan. It turns out that ever since 1980, our empathy levels have been gradually dropping, but in 2000, they suddenly plummeted 40 percent. Forty! Not surprisingly, a Gallup report just released last week reported that the US has dropped from 12th position to number 23 on the global well-being index. It's a strange paradox, we are at the same time, more self-centered than ever, and less happy and healthy for it.



With humility, though, we can give birth to a whole new story.

In the late 70s, two Buddhist monks -- Rev. Heng Sure and Heng Chau -- began a mind-blowing **bowing pilgrimage** along the California coastline. For 900 miles, they would walk three steps and take one full bow to the ground. Their practice

was to meet everything as a reflection of their mind and rebound it with a heart of love. One day, crossing through a rough neighborhood in LA, they found themselves surrounded by a bunch of gang members. One of them threw down a trash can, removed the rod connecting the can with its lid, threateningly started screeching that rod around the side of the trash can. Sluzzzz, slussssh, as if sharpening his blade and signaling the impending fate of the monk's head. Other friends egged him on with a menacing chant. As **Rev. Heng Sure** would later write in his journals, "All the hair of my body stood up in fear." Yet his commitment was to unconditional compassion: no matter what you bring to this moment, I bow to the goodness in you. May you be blessed. And so, he humbly went for that final bow at the teenager's feet. His would-be attacker's fist was raised in the air poised to strike, but he froze. Completely froze. Others around him fell silent. Imagine if you're about to pummel someone and he bows to you with great compassion. The monks continued bowing right past the dumbstruck gang.

Humility is seen as a sign of weakness, in today's culture, when, in reality, it is the gateway for an unparalleled and profound strength.

*Humility is not weakness; it is the epitome of strength.
Humility moves a person away from human, personal weakness
and limitation into divine expression, strength, and expansion.*

- Donald Curtis

We see examples of this across all wisdom traditions. In Sikhism, Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth of their ten gurus, offered this credo to all the warriors: "Humility is my mace; becoming the dust of everybody's feet is my sword. No evil can withstand that." Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples, the 12 apostles, and then adds, "Know ye what I have? I have given you an example." At another point, he explicitly states, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." In Jainism, as you all know, there is the powerful practice of Micchami Dukkadam on the last day of the holy Paryushan period, where Jains actively seek and offer forgiveness: "If I have caused you offense in any way, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed, then I seek your forgiveness." Every year, on this day, I receive many such emails from Jain friends. Simply being on the receiving end is such a humbling feeling, that I can only imagine what it means to be on the other end.

We have so many contemporary examples as well. Mother Teresa called humility the "mother of all virtues" and reminded us, "We can do no great things. Only small things with great love." And, of course, we have Gandhi. When he died, with less than 9 possessions to his name, journalist Edwin Murrow read this across the radio waves: "Man without wealth, without property, without official title or office. Mahatma Gandhi was not a commander of great armies nor ruler of vast lands. He could boast no scientific achievements or artistic gift. Yet men, governments and dignitaries from all over the world have joined hands today to pay homage to this little brown man in the loincloth who led his country to freedom."

(To be continued in the next issue of Jain Digest)



Nipun Mehta is the founder of ServiceSpace, an incubator of projects that works at the intersection of volunteerism, technology and gift-economy. What started as an experiment with four friends in the Silicon Valley has now grown to a global ecosystem of over 500,000 members that has delivered millions of dollars in service for free. Nipun has received many awards, including the Jefferson Award for Public Service, Wavy Gravy's Humanitarian award, and Dalai Lama's *Unsung Hero of Compassion*.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

JAINA Convention 2019 – A Crowning Glory of Faith and Philosophy

By Erika Abrams



My shock turned to “ahhhh.” Jainism does not live in a bubble!!

It bursts those bubbles that hide the truth and then gets to work making the world more beautiful. But I didn’t really know this before the 2019 JAINA Convention...

This 2019 JAINA convention seemed to me—an outsider—to be the crowning glory of a faith and philosophy that has served the world as the most spiritually advanced, clean, ethical body of thought ever to be popularized, ever to be institutionalized.

Yet I was *shocked* to find the convention spread vegan values in its every breath.

But that surprise was **my mistake**. My *surprise* was an expression of my completely inadequate grasp of Jainism. My unfamiliarity with Mahavira’s teaching – as one of his very core values – about the need to adhere to *asteya*, (non-stealing.) That stewardship and protection of the earth and all its beings is simply an expression of *asteya*. I should not have been surprised to find JAINA championing practices which will protect all species including cows; championing the notion of taking public political action against animal abuse and the industries and practices which lead to climate change.

JAINA’s convention speakers’ themes were not mere examples of *progressive* thinking. They were expressions of fundamental Jainism, of Jainism at its most *basic*.

Arching over the convention like a sparkling spiritual awning were the themes of veganism, earth-protection, climate change, and the practice of simple kindness. Every speaker I heard, in keynote addresses and break-out sessions, inspired listeners to identify violence and oppose it. Urged listeners to recognize theft and oppose it. Invited listeners to recognize overweening attachments and resist them.

From the opening addresses memorializing the beloved Gurudev Chitrabhanu by Mahesh Wadher, to the fiery passion of Philip Wollen, to the session on dairy trade violence by Tushar Mehta, to drafting the position paper expressing the Jain community’s stance on climate change with Dr Jina Shah, one by one the speakers advocated for an ahimsa that grasps the terrible effects of modern society.

But moreover, so did the bright faces of the sea of Jain listeners in the audience, spanning four generations, arriving from all parts of the country and the world, all gathered to become better Jains and finer humans.

20 years ago, I co-founded Animal Aid Unlimited, one of India’s most active animal shelters where abandoned cows, donkeys and never-owned street dogs and other species get medical help when they most desperately need it in Udaipur, Rajasthan. This work has naturally led me to many Jains, and has inspired many Jains to find Animal Aid Unlimited.

But I have been frustrated by many of these Jains – whether munis, lay people, old or young, who are unable, so far, to grasp the concept that dairying is theft and that every drop of ghee poured into every piece of halwa was meant for someone else, someone with four legs who is young, hungry and innocent; someone who will inevitably die for our halwa. Some Jains are indeed living with blinkers on – but is Jainism itself a blinkering faith? The answer to *that* is what I learned at the 2019 JAINA Convention:

Jainism stretches itself to change, if change is needed to bring goodness. To practice Jainism is to be: *Courageous* enough to look at violence in the eye and choose against it, *Generous* enough to look at waste and abhor it, *Kind* enough to not consider it “impolite” to ask someone to change if it protects the vulnerable; even if the person you’re asking to change is your own grandmother. I saw and heard such expressions of Jainism throughout the 2019 JAINA Convention.

With joy I say thank you. And Wow. And Jai Jinendra.



Erika Abrams is Co-founder and President of Animal Aid Unlimited, one of India’s busiest street animal rescue centers, located in Udaipur, Rajasthan India, treating mainly injured or ill cows, donkeys, bulls and dogs. Animal Aid’s staff of 80 and volunteers from all over the world, serve the most destitute animals who arrive in the hospital with fractures, wounds, infections, tumors, and diseases.

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To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

A Look at 9/11 through the Lens of Compassion, Empathy and Selflessness

By Reena Shah

As an educator and a practicing Jain, I have always made a conscious effort to explain the tragedy of 9/11 as a triumph of compassion, empathy, and selflessness, not the onslaught of ruin. Many other educators like me are attempting to close the disparity, showing students what it felt like in America that fall, and what they can learn emotionally from the weeks that followed.



Teaching children the compassionate side of 9/11 is an incremental process. Eighteen years later, students across the country, from elementary grades to college campuses, are learning about the day in large part through public service and remembrance. This approach makes “goodness” the core lesson of the day. In fact, framing 9/11 through an empathetic lens for me is largely due to number of stories that I have read online and changed my perception of September 11 from a “day of evil to a day of good.” Empathy, compassion, and selflessness are big virtues of soul that each individual should strive to develop in them.

In this article I am sharing two of the several stories here that have inspired me and taken me closer to the above virtues.

Pentagon Tour Guide Beau Doboszanski

This is the story of a tour guide at the Pentagon who gave medical aid to the injured outside, then went back in to the building while it was still in flames. Army Specialist Beau Doboszanski was working as a tour guide on the opposite side of the Pentagon when the building was struck by American Airlines Flight 77 and didn't even hear it. But Doboszanski, a former volunteer firefighter and trained EMT, responded after a Navy captain asked for anyone with medical training.

Specialist Beau Doboszanski was a tour guide that morning, on the far side of the building. So far away, in fact, he never heard the plane hit. But he shortly felt the commotion. He could have gone home — no one would have blamed him. But he was also a trained EMT and came from a family of firefighters. Doboszanski ended up running around the building to try to get to the crash but was stopped by police. Eventually he went around the barricades to reach a medical triage station and helped give first aid to numerous victims.

Afterward, he joined a six-man team that went back in to look for survivors, while the building was still in flames. When people started streaming out of the building and screaming, he sprinted toward the crash site. For hours, he alternated between treating his co-workers and dashing into the inferno with a team of six men.

Army Veteran Rick Rescorla saved 2,700 Lives

Another story is the tale of an army veteran who was responsible for saving more than 2,700 lives that day, and he sang songs to keep people calm while they evacuated. Rick Rescorla was already a hero of the battlefields of Vietnam, where he earned the Silver Star and other awards for his exploits as an Army officer.

Many more in the South Tower would hear his songs on September 11, where Rescorla was working as head of corporate security for Morgan Stanley. When American Flight 11 hit the tower next to him, Port Authority ordered Rescorla to keep his employees at their desks, according to San Diego Source. Instead Rick told his friend, "Everything above where that plane hit is going to collapse, and it's going to take the whole building with it. I'm getting my people ... out of here."

He had made Morgan Stanley employees practice emergency drills for years, and it paid off that day: Just 16 minutes after the first plane hit the opposite tower, more than 2,700 employees and visitors were out when the second plane hit their building. During the evacuation, Rescorla calmly reassured people singing "God Bless America" and "Men of Harlech" over a bullhorn as they walked down the stairs.

During the evacuation Rescorla called his wife and told her, "... I have to get these people out safely. If something should happen to me, I want you to know I've never been happier. You made my life." Rescorla was last seen on the 10th floor of the South Tower, heading upward to look for any stragglers. His body was never found.

Live and Help Others Live

These stories of pure love, compassion, and selflessness inspire us to do better in our lives when we get caught up in our web of selfishness. President Obama said: "The compassion that rose in the hearts and minds of the American people on September 11 still serves as the ultimate rebuke to the evil of those who attacked us ... Volunteers donated time, money, and blood to ensure wounds gave way to healing and recovery."

Jainism is a religion of compassion, universal love and friendliness. It aims at the welfare of all living beings, and not of humans alone. It maintains that living beings are infinite, all so called empty spaces in the universe are filled with minute living beings. It is one of the tenets of Jainism that all living beings desire life and not death. Not only "Love and Let Live" but "Live and Help Others Live" is our principle. Just as the head of a family looks after the welfare of the members of the family, a human being, looks after fellow human beings and also after the lower orders of creation. Ahimsa is an aspect of daya (compassion, empathy, and charity), and jiv daya means caring for and sharing with all living beings, tending, protecting and serving them. It entails universal friendliness (maitri), universal forgiveness (kshama) and universal fearlessness (abhaya).

*(Source for stories: Szoldra, Paul. Sep. 11, 2017, 6:27 AM. Published in Business Insider
<https://www.businessinsider.com/7-incredible-stories-of-heroism-on-911-2015-9>)*



Reena is one of the Jain Digest editors. 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.

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Section: Transformation

Section Editor: Ramesh Khandhar

[Learning about Jainism, its teachings, values, and ideals is certainly a good thing. But the real transformation can happen only if we practice what we have learned, if we make it a way of life. As the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu has said, "A journey of a 1000 miles starts with one small step". In this section, we will include articles that will explore these small steps. The articles about nutritional Vegan recipes, optimism, gratitude, generosity, short meditations, introspection, and many such topics will nurture body, mind & soul and will help the readers march ahead in their spiritual journey.]

Updhan: An Experiment and Experience of Joy and Bravery

By Dr Hema Pokharna

I am grateful for this brief moment to pay tribute to a remarkable Acharya, Pujya Acharya Udayvallabh Suriiji under whose supervision I had the good fortune of doing Updhan. *(For more information about Acharyshriji, please see the article in the "Devotion" Section of this issue of Jain Digest)*

Acharyaji's Transformational Pravachans

During last chaturmas my kalyanmitra Shri Deepakbhai Bardoliwala sent me recordings of Acharyaji's Pravachans and I listened to them as soon as I received them. Acharya Bhagwant's words energized me to think and resonate with the ideas of living life from the depths of my being. One recommendation that really struck me hard was that while cutting Bhindi (Okra) leave one behind with the intention of giving it Abhay Dan (a gift of fearlessness), He recommended that one can build the subtle capacity for Love and nonviolence practice in this very small way.

His talks were vibrant fountain of ideas to minimize violence moment to moment and expand our capacity for compassion in every thought, word and action, including minimizing usage of water. Other ideas focused on becoming an exceptional human being. He expressed his objectives most eloquently to the power in me - unafraid to believe that change is possible and willing to challenge the conventional wisdom. He encouraged participants with a clear and penetrating vision to work on the relationship between their inner lives and how that can affect the outer world. He fostered forward thinking ideas to expand-or-explode-traditional ideals while redefining the contemporary one in uncovering the wisdom within each one's own nature. Although he touches modernity, the teachings are timeless.

What was surprising and ingenious was his recommendations of how to do ashtaprakari pooja meaningfully and purposefully, and make it a conversation with God through visualization, words and poetry and songs. Raised sthanakwasi I had never done pooja. After listening to Acharya Bhagwant, I actually did the Pooja, the touch was indeed an electrifying experience and there were moments of silence where I could feel the clarity unfold within me. What made it more meaningful was that the pooja was not only in the actual temple but it began with me waking up with the plan to go to the temple and sing Chalo Chalo Jinji ne Bhetwa (let's go to meet Jineshwar Bhagwan). The energy that sparked with words was fun and magical in itself.

In his talks he was inviting the audience to join in an experiment and experience of a retreat called Updhan - a trial of living a life of monkhood-renunciation for a limited period of 48 days, 35 days or 18 days.

Preparation for Personal Transformation

Only having met Him through His pravachan recordings, I signed up for the Updhan under the guidance and supervision of Pujya Acharya Udayvallabhsuriiji. At that moment I had no clue what it would be in reality.

The Updhan was held in Ambawadi, Ahmedabad. The morning of my arrival on January 19, 2019 at the Updhan Campus, there were over 500 participants. The youngest was five-and-a-half years old, and the oldest was 80 years, who had been in Updhan 30 days before me. I was a new kid on the block, a blank slate in terms of the rituals and religious norms and etiquettes. Fortunately, on my arrival I got to witness a Diksha of a whole family: a young couple and their two teenage sons. They came on the stage richly dressed and after some prayers and rituals they returned with white clothes and heads shaved. They were now a nun and monks and had renounced the world to live a life of Sadhu and Sadhvis. They looked so joyfully peaceful. This was the ultimate enduring influence of Updhan, a lifelong commitment to monkhood.

The Updhan tap is performed in Paushadh Vrata, which is mimicking the lifestyle of an ideal Jain monk, with vows to stay in highest self-awareness, detached from the world and a commitment to not harm any organisms.

The purpose of Updhan as I understood it was to experiment and experience the possibility of freeing oneself from dependency on anything - not even a person or thing - and free oneself from the conditioning of materialist luxuries of life. When I arrived and was admitted to the Updhan, I learned that this included not only no use of electronics, but also living in only one set of clothes for 18 days, no laundry, no bath, no brushing teeth or hair, no bed, no footwear and not even necessities of a flush toilet or flowing water and soap. This was to train oneself to be free of subjugation to the flesh and its bondage to the things, thoughts and activities of the body, including money or other 'necessities' of human living. The focus was shifted from the material to the mental, and then the spiritual power of the union with the soul (Atma).

Experiencing Life as Monk

During these days, each one had to fast on one day, and the second day one could do Ekasan - that is, eating one meal sitting in one place. Every day we recited the Rosary (108 beads) 20 times saying the Namokar Mantra; performed 100 Khamasaman (kneeling with head touching the ground); and performed Kayotsarga (meditating and chanting the Logassa Sutra for 100 times and performing the Paushadhvrata, etc.). Wake-up time was by 3:30 am, and sleeping by 10 pm.

The whole exercise of Updhan was to come closer to the experience and awareness of the soul separate from the body (Bhed Gyan) - a reminder that I am the soul and have a body; instead of thinking that I am the body and have a soul. Each day was filled with exercises and rituals of minute observation of the mupatti, clothes and utensils (padilen), affirming my commitments to the soul and nonviolence in action. The rigor of prayers included Iriyavaiya sutra after every activity and movement, increasing awareness and asking for forgiveness of the minute violence done knowingly or unknowingly, followed by Pratikraman, Chaitavandan, Dev vandan, and 2 Pravachans. One could only drink boiled water from sunrise to sunset.

Along with these, one must study Jain Agamas. This austerity was not only severe but prolonged. A special austerity called Pratima was also to be performed by a Śrāvaka to purify and perfect their life. The 11 types of Pratima are included. (1) Samyaktva (2) Vrat (3) Samayik (4) Paushadh (5) Niyam (6) Brahmacharya (7) Sachitta Tyag (8) Uddhisht (9) Preshyarambha tyag (10) Arambha tyag (11) Shramanbhuth.



Pujya Acharya Udayvallabhsuriji did his role as an Acharya with elegant simplicity. Being in his presence was to get more than a glimpse of eternity. He spoke with courage, spunk and thoughtfulness. He has reached beyond the status quo to dare to trust life and surrender to its ultimate perfection. His guidance and role modeling was to move beyond blame, fearlessly live our highest purpose, and become an unstoppable force for good. Reading the several books he has authored is an adventure that frees you from the crippling beliefs that trap us in a victim mindset or excuses, and leads us to take full responsibility for our thoughts, words and actions.

Some of the other highlights included the love fest - like experience being with the Sadhvijis. The Sadhvijis helping me were less than 25 years in age and had taken Diksha as a family - parents and sisters. At that young age they functioned with clarity, commitment and equanimity. There were hundreds of young kids and adults during Updhan wanting their attention, and the kids sometimes pulling at them to get their attention, and it was amazing to witness their ability to attend to all with God-like patience and compassion. They were a storehouse of wisdom, laughter, joy and love.

The other fascinating thing was kajo, which is sweeping the floor with a cotton broom and then counting the bodies of dead insects, referred as kalevar, and then depending on where and how many bodies each participant found, they got to mourn the death and take responsibility for it by asking for forgiveness. Acharya Bhagwant was very diligent about this exercise and instilling the importance of awareness and reverence for all life, however small.



I asked Acharya if I could come and sit with him for a few minutes and be a witness to how he deals with people. How does an acharya do and be, and he said yes.

Sitting there was such a gift. He sat in his little space with all the other sadhus in adjoining spaces, all in the open, with a small desk, and he functioned in such amazing ways like a one-man army. Little kids and young adults and elderly, anyone, could come and ask him anything in the world, and he connected with each one like a magician or a wizard without a mantle, and each one left with such confidence and joy. Witnessing the simplicity, approachability and sincerity was the biggest gift that made the challenges of Updhan worth it. Every minute was filled with magic and gratitude.

Yet one Sunday at the Updhan was the most difficult, and I could not stop sobbing. I wanted to go home. I went to Acharya Bhagwant and shared my feelings, and he was so silent. He did not say a word of comfort or reassurance. He was just silent but very present, and in that presence I felt my sorrow of many lifetimes was dissolved. This was what Divine Empathy feels like, I imagined. I felt cleansed, and I lived

the rest of the days most elevated and joyous, a very transformative moment, indeed.

I acknowledge the endless support and generosity I received from many Sadhus, Sadhvis, and participants. Much gratitude to Shri Deepakbhai Bardoliwala and Rupalbhabhi for their generosity and immense love in hosting me, visiting, guiding and celebrating every step of the way!

Watch these short videos:

Kids doing Updhan: <https://youtu.be/xdqm8sy5HYk>

Final Day of Updhan: <https://youtu.be/gh5E-B0hciU>

Acharya Maharaj Giving Mangalik: <https://youtu.be/oFrjTVn8gzw>



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How to Let Go of an Old Regret

By Christine Carter, Sept 20, 2018 (Syndicated from Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley)

If we don't confront the past, we can be haunted by sadness and self-blame.

Recently, I went to high school Back-to-School night with my first husband, Mike, and we ran into a colleague of his I'd never met before. "This is Christine," Mike said brightly, and then he hesitated. "My, um, my...ex-wife."



As soon as we walked away, he apologized. "I'm so sorry for introducing you as my ex-wife. It's such an ugly term. I should have just said you were Molly's mom, but he doesn't know Molly, so I wasn't sure what to say." We have been divorced for ten years; we've both been re-married for five. I harbor no ill feeling about being called Mike's ex-wife, but I was touched by his sensitivity and kindness. At the end of the evening, he even opened my car door for me.

Mike is just such a nice guy. We get along so well now that you'd never know that our relationship was once high-conflict, marred by anger and criticism.

I have hundreds of old narratives about what went wrong in our marriage, but I've never been quite sure which one is true, which one to believe. The narrative that haunts me the most is the one in which our divorce was my fault. I was too critical of Mike; I provoked too much conflict. I should have seen that my complaints about *him* were actually [things I didn't like about myself](#). I should have accepted that romance would inevitably fade, and, at the same time, I should have worked harder to keep the romance alive.

This narrative is laced with the fear that I behaved selfishly, and, as a consequence, I've harmed my kids irreparably. It inspires shame and regret, launching me down a slippery slope of self-criticism that leaves me feeling like I'm not good enough.

I've been thinking about this all week. September 10th was Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the Jewish New Year. My husband, Mark, who for the record is just as nice a guy as Mike, is Jewish, and I go with his family to services at their temple. For ten days after Rosh Hashanah, Jews show sorrow and regret for wrong done in the previous year.

I must have some catching up to do, because when I was reflecting on my regrets about this past year, I felt sorrow for mistakes I made a decade ago. It's not that I regret my divorce; I don't. I do believe it was the right thing for our family. But I could see clearly what I would do differently now, given the chance. It was time to let go of some old regrets.

Over the last 10 days, I moved through a few steps that have each been helpful.

1. Forgiving Myself

Yesterday was the "Day of Atonement," and it brought me some peace. I'd been [reading about self-forgiveness](#), and [Rick Hanson's recommendations](#) unlocked something in me. He advises us to acknowledge the facts surrounding the circumstances or behavior we regret, including those that are hard to face. I let myself remember the divorce, and all the people that it affected, both then and now.

Then, I thought about my mistakes. But Hanson recommends distinguishing between our *moral* failings and simple *unskillfulness*. This step was a huge revelation to me. As I look back on my failed marriage, I see a mess of unskillfulness. Even things that might be perceived by others as immoral—to some people, divorce itself is immoral—seemed to me to stem from my own lack of certain emotional skills. It turns out that the list of things I'd do differently wasn't that long. Ten years ago, I simply didn't have the skills I needed to keep my marriage together. There is an innocence there that is easy to forgive.

2. Taking Accountability

This sort of self-reflection can be really productive. It's important to take accountability for our mistakes and our failings, and to repair the hurt we cause other people. How else can we do better?

Seeing that I behaved unskillfully allows me to [take responsibility for mistakes](#) that I made, rather than clinging to my judgments and justifications. At the same time, it helps me not let my mistakes define who I am. I am more than my missteps and bad habits.

It also gives me somewhere to go: I can practice *now* the skills I needed *then*. This approach helps me respond when well-meaning people—observing how well Mike and I now parent together—wonder out loud if we ever regret getting divorced. We are different people now than we were then. Getting divorced gave us ample opportunity to practice more skillful ways of relating to one another.

3. Practicing Acceptance

Here's something I've learned the hard way: [Acceptance is the precursor](#) to atonement. I've finally surrendered resistance to my divorce and my unskillfulness, as well as the sorrow that I've felt about it all.

I've also, finally, found peace in accepting that there is a lot I don't know. I don't know if the marriage would have worked if I'd been more skillful. It's easier to think that there is no way it would have, so it doesn't matter what we did and didn't do. For ten years, I've been constructing narratives that make my memories more black-and-white than they really are. These narratives provide me with certainty that I did the right thing. But only until they don't.

Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is an absurd one.

- Voltaire

Certainty can be temporarily reassuring, but it can also turn on us, revealing its opposite. One minute I'm *sure* that my marriage with Mike would never have worked; the next I'm sure it could have, because look how well we get along now. Accepting uncertainty is such an underwhelming alternative to feeling certain that you did the right thing, even if feeling right doesn't last. But, ultimately, uncertainty is the lesser of two ills; as Voltaire wrote, "Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is an absurd one."

I do know one thing for certain, though: If I'd made different choices ten years ago, I would not have the life I have now. It's a life that I love, one where I'm happy and fulfilled. I love Mark and his big, loud Jewish family. I love our marriage, even when it's hard. I can't imagine life without my amazing stepchildren, whom I love and adore beyond reason. I know my daughters can't imagine life without their stepsiblings and stepparents. It's a life that I would never consciously give up. But, ironically, it's one that I was giving up, unconsciously, every time I harbored those old fears and sorrows.

Accepting the past and all its messiness has allowed me to let go of what I'd actually already lost. Already I'm better able to shift my gaze away from the past, to focus my attention on the present. The past, and my stories about the past, no longer feel relevant. There is no emotional hook. This, I've come to believe, is atonement.



Christine Carter, Ph.D. is a Senior Fellow at the Greater Good Science Center. She is the author of [The Sweet Spot: How to Accomplish More by Doing Less](#) (Ballantine Books, 2015) and [Raising Happiness: 10 Simple Steps for More Joyful Kids and Happier Parents](#) (Random House, 2010). A former director of the GGSC, she served for many years as author of its parenting blog, [Raising Happiness](#).

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

Transforming Our Diet: Vegan Food Resources

Jain – Vegan Dairy Alternatives



Milk

- Silk (Soy, Almond, Oat, Coconut, Cashew Milk)
- Ripple (Pea Protein Milk)
- So Delicious (Coconut, Almond, Cashew Milk)

(Available at: Sprouts, Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Target, Walmart, & Regular Grocery Stores)

Yogurt

- Silk (Plain & flavored yogurt- soy and almond base)
- So Delicious (Plain and flavored yogurt -coconut base)
- Trader Joe's Brand (Flavored yogurt -soy & coconut base)

(Available at: Sprouts, Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Target, & Regular Grocery Stores)

Cheese/ Cream Cheese/ Sour Cream

- Follow Your Heart Vegan Gourmet Cheese Alternative Mozzarella block
- Thrive Market Vegan Parmesan-Style Cheese Alternative
- Tofutti Cream Cheese/ Trader Joe's Vegan Cream Cheese
- Tofutti Sour Cream

(Available at: Sprouts, Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Target, & Regular Grocery Stores)

Ice-Cream

- Ben and Jerry's Vegan Ice-cream- lots of great flavors available
- Trader Joe's Vegan Ice-cream Flavors: Vanilla, Cherry Chocolate Chip
- Na Moo Vegan Ice-cream- Several flavors available

(Available at: Sprouts, Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Target, & Regular Grocery Stores)

Butter

- Earth Balance Organic Buttery Spread (soy and soy-free options)

(Available at: Sprouts, Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Target, & Regular Grocery Stores)

Coffee Creamer

- Silk (Soy, Almond, Oat, Coconut, Cashew base creamer)
- Ripple (Pea Protein base creamer)
- So Delicious (Almond & Oat base creamer)

(Available at: Sprouts, Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Target, & Regular Grocery Stores)

Section: Young Generation

Section Editor: Sanjay Bhandari

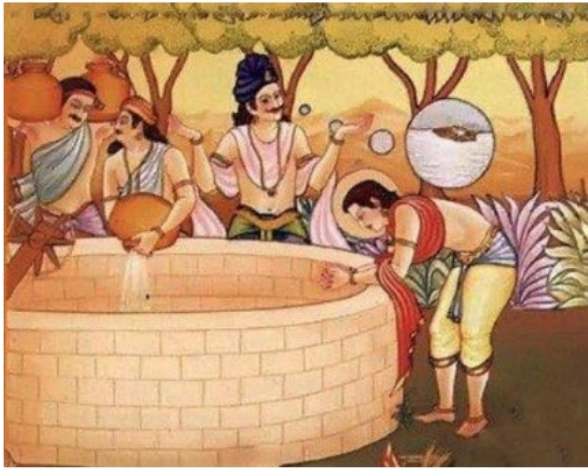
[This section is about our most treasured asset – our children. It is for them, about them and in some cases, written by them. It will contain Jain stories, games and puzzles, humor, art contests and articles written by students on various topics. It will also contain articles written by YJA and YJP members.]

Mahamantri Abhaykumar

(Source: aagamjainism.blogspot.com)

The message of Bhagwan Mahavir had spread far and wide and the impact was felt by common people as well as the kings and the emperors. One of the chief devotees of Bhagwan Mahavir was Shrenik Bimbisar, the king of Magadh. His son Abhaykumar was also Mahavir's chief devotee and there are historical references about him in the records of the Svetambara and Digambara tradition, and also in the ancient Buddhist Majjhima Nikaya. It is also believed that Abhaykumar had once met and honored Gautam Buddha. This reflects his reverence for other religions.

The minister to King Shrenik, Abhaykumar, was an embodiment of supreme intelligence, religiosity and detachment. His keen intellect had helped to solve many thorny problems. It, then, became customary to write the words "May we be blessed with the intellect of Abhaykumar", in the account books worshipped during the festival of Deepawali.



Once King Shrenik challenged his son Abhaykumar to retrieve a ring from an empty well without descending into it. Abhaykumar threw cow dung into the well and allowed it to dry. The ring stuck to the dung cake and now he filled the well with water. The cake, with the ring in it, swelled to the rim and thus the ring was retrieved. Similarly, he had helped the king to nab the thief stealing mangoes from the garden.

Once the king wanted to learn the skill of mesmerism to attract the people towards him from a person of low caste, but he could not. Abhaykumar found out the cause of his failure. He said: "You cannot learn any skill or art sitting on your throne. Install the person of low caste in a high seat as your teacher and then only the goddess of knowledge will be pleased with you." Thus, he established the supremacy of a teacher.

Abhaykumar was renowned as highly intelligent, loving and an ideal minister. He used to learn about people's problems by travelling incognito and this helped him to defeat conspiracies against the kingdom. There are many such instances to prove his razor-sharp intellect and ingenuity and Jain literature is replete with stories testifying to his qualities. He was also generous, courteous and self-abnegating. When King Shrenik thought of appointing him his successor, he, with the consent of all, instead became a disciple of Bhagwan Mahavir.

Abhaykumar travelled far and wide and spread the message of Mahavir. He visited a region known as Parasya in those days and known now as Iran. The prince of Parasya was Abhaykumar's friend. The prince, influenced by the preaching of Mahavir, had also become his disciple later.

It is said that, at the request of Adrak, Abhaykumar had sent a golden idol to him. The darshan of the idol caused the desire for vairag (renunciation) in Adrak and he set out on a journey to ancient India. The members of his family tried in vain to dissuade him. He, then, met Bhagwan Mahavir and surrendered himself to him.

Abhaykumar, thus, proved himself a competent, intelligent minister and also a highly devoted monk. In the Jain tradition, Abhaykumar symbolizes an ideal blend of intellect, devotion and sacrifice. He renounced the worldly pleasures and chose the difficult path of penance. All the princes of Shrenik Bimbisar –Abhaykumar, Meghkumar, Nandisen and Varisen –led a life of renunciation though born into affluence and luxuries. Under the spell of Bhagwan Mahavir's influence, they gave up everything and walked on the difficult path of penance and spirituality.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>



Discovering Jainism & Discovering Me

By Apeksha Bandi (Syndicated from <https://medium.com/@YJProfessionals>)

*Our personal identities are multifaceted and inevitably evolve over time. Recently, several young Jain professionals participated in a “Self-Reflection Challenge” where they explored how their personal identification with Jainism has influenced their professional identity and choices. All submissions to this challenge passed through a rigorous evaluation process, where “Discovering Jainism & Discovering Me” by Apeksha Bandi was awarded an **Honorable Mention**.*

Jai Jinendra,

I am Apeksha Bandi, a strong believer in principles of Jainism and a learner curious to know more about our scientific and logic-based religion. By profession, I am a Process Engineer working with Shell (Oil & Gas) based out of Houston, Texas. I graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay in 2015 with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Chemical Engineering. I am originally from Udaipur in India, and I come from a very humble family background. I moved to Houston a few months back and consider myself lucky to have a good network of local friends.

I feel blessed to be born into a family with very strong religious beliefs and lifestyle. Since an early age, I have had many opportunities to understand Jainism through *Shivirs*, *Pathshalas* and family members. My grandfather leads the activities of *Mumukshu* community in Udaipur and is my role model. I look up to him for how he dedicates most of his time in *Aatma Vichar* and its application in his day-to-day life. In the next few paragraphs, I would like to share Jain principles which entice me the most. I am not a Jain scholar, and I seek apology if my understanding is not accurate as per Jain scriptures (*Jinvani*).

Jainism encourages one to pursue right knowledge about self and the world. It teaches that the universe consists of 6 substances (*Dravya*), one of which is who we are, i.e., living beings or *Jeev*. All *Dravyas* are separate from each other. They are also independent; a *Jeev* cannot influence, in any capacity, the state of another *Jeev* which changes according to its own *Karma*. As per another Jain doctrine of *Krambadhha Paryay*, the state of every living and nonliving thing in this universe changes according to a pre-determined sequence. My belief in this doctrine guides me to lead a balanced life irrespective of external good or bad circumstances. It is also linked to the concept of *Sarvagyata*, according to which, past, present and future states of all beings are known to God. It does not imply that efforts (*Purusharth*) are not required for an outcome. What it means is how, when and by what efforts an event will happen, is already fixed. In a very practical sense, conviction in basic Jain principles can help a person to overcome all negative emotions attached with undesirable situations in life. Furthermore, Jainism teaches that all our worries associated with the external world are futile, as they are separate from who we are (*Jeev*). It teaches that true happiness is eternal and lies in understanding the true nature of self (*Jeev*).

Another amazing aspect about Jainism is that there is no concept of God as the creator or supreme power in the universe. Any *Jeev* that has attained *Veetragta* (total detachment) is equivalent to God. Jains worship God with the intent to take

inspiration to attain their qualities (*Veetragta*) themselves. The emphasis in Jainism is to realize the true nature of self where each *Jeev* is capable to attain *Moksha* through right knowledge, right belief and right conduct.

There are strong links between Jainism and modern science. Major scientific discoveries which have happened in the past few centuries are already explained in ancient Jain scriptures, whereas, other phenomenon are not even established by science yet. Jain beliefs that plants have life and that every single drop of water has thousands of living organisms (*Jeev*) were proved by science only in the 19th century. Jain cosmology details out the shape and functioning of the entire universe, including its constituents such as space, matter, and time. It also describes the universe as an uncreated entity, existing from infinity, having neither a beginning nor an end. This aligns with the Law of Conservation of Mass which states that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. Another fundamental Jain doctrine is *Anekantavada*, according to which, absolute truth can have multiple aspects. Einstein's Theory of Relativity holds common ground with this doctrine. A few weeks back, I attended a session on ongoing research on Jainism at Rice University in Houston. I was surprised to know that most of the research is based on very ancient Jain scriptures for which there are limited copies globally. One would be surprised to know that the Jain scripture, '*Pravachansarji*,' is taught at ~150 universities globally.

Jains are encouraged to be ultracareful in following *Ahimsa* in day-to-day life. An important aspect of the Jain way of life involves dietary choices and habits. Jains drink only filtered, boiled water and do not consume food after sunset. The Jain diet does not include root vegetables which are considered to have disproportionately high number of living organisms (*Jeev*). I vastly follow a Jain diet, and I feel grateful that I understand the reasons behind this choice. When I joined IIT Bombay in 2010, I had to put special efforts towards following which Jain food was served in the mess for the next 5 years. Within last 3 years of my professional life, I have traveled frequently to Europe, UAE, and Egypt and have been able to find/prepare Jain food. Some international airlines also include Jain food in their menu. I share these examples to highlight that following a Jain diet is not as challenging as some of us might think. From my own story, I can say that where there is a will, there is a way.

I would also like to share a very personal view about following a Jain diet in a professional setup. Amidst the international and diverse work culture which forms the core of many multinational firms, there can be situations where following a Jain diet might feel non-inclusive, or even embarrassing, for some. From my personal experience, I can say that the majority of the people around you will appreciate your dietary choice if you also let them know why you follow it. For me, this often served as a conversation starter about Jainism and the concept of 'minimizing' *Jeev Hinsa*. Some of my friends have developed an interest to learn more about Jainism themselves. I would encourage all Jains to be proud and confident about religious choices on both a personal as well as a professional front.

In the long-term, I aspire to learn more about Jainism and its practical application in life. I would also like to learn more about the scientific theories in Jainism, including, Jain cosmology and mathematics. I hope to someday be able to explain Jain values to the young population with a very rational and scientific approach. Lastly, I would like to recognize that each one of us is extremely talented and motivated towards achieving success in our own professional field. I am certain that if we put similar efforts to learn and understand Jain value systems, then, our lives will be more meaningful. I wish all readers and myself good luck to maintain focus in a world full of distractions.



I am Apeksha Bandi, a process engineer working with Shell. At Shell, I support early stage decision making for upstream oil and gas development projects. I graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay in 2015 with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Chemical Engineering. I am originally from Udaipur in India, a beautiful town widely known for its lakes and palaces. I have recently moved to Houston, Texas where I expect to spend the next one year. My immediate family includes my grandparents, parents and younger brother. I am a travel enthusiast who also likes to practice dance and rehearse singing during my free time. At present, I am spending time to learn Kathak and Yoga. If you like to get in touch, feel free to write me an email at apekshabandi@gmail.com.

To provide your comments about this article, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Oct2019>

Section: Conversations

Section Editor: To Be Assigned

[Some of the information that our readers are interested in is best captured by interviewing people. Such interviews will be published in this section. This section will also be used for answering reader's questions on various topics]



An Interview with Kanika Patawari: A young Jain professional, musician, and entrepreneur

(This article was originally published in March 2019 issue of YJProfessionals)

Moderated by Priyanka Shah, Editor-in-Chief, *YJPerspectives*

Hi, Kanika! Thank you for your time today. On behalf of Young Jain Professionals (YJP), I would like to congratulate you for your selection as the Q1–2019 YJP Professional Spotlight Award Winner! Can you please tell us about yourself? What got you into music?

I was born & raised in Antwerp, Belgium amongst a fairly large Jain community. I discovered a love for music at quite an early age. I was 10 years old when I went to my first concert to watch Beyoncé take over the stage. This concert blew my mind. I knew right then that this was the world I wanted to be a part of. By 5th grade, I was writing, playing and performing my own songs!

Did you pursue any formal education in music, or is this just a natural talent of yours?

I worked my way to being accepted into the Berklee College of Music, Boston, where I spent four years earning my undergraduate degree. Moving to America from a small city like Antwerp was an enormous transition for me. I immediately took a strong liking towards producing music during the technology classes. Also, the strong lack of females in these classes was a major incentive to choose production as my course of study. During my time at Berklee, I was selected to perform with A. R. Rahman at his tribute concert in 2014. As part of the Berklee Indian Ensemble, I had the opportunity to celebrate a lot of Indian music through performances and music videos. Our videos have favorably garnered significant attention on YouTube, especially the “Jiya Jale” cover: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZy8115sNXM>

...the strong lack of females in these classes was a major incentive to choose production as my course of study

How did you move into the music industry professionally?

Soon after graduating from Berklee, I moved to Los Angeles to intern at Simon Cowell's label under Sony Music. This was an exciting phase of talent scouting and artist development. It was during my time here that I realized my interest in the business side of music. This is probably thanks to my heritage of Marwari business people.

Since graduating in 2015 and partially, while working at Sony, I spent the last few years developing my sound as an artist. My music is influenced by the variety of music I grew up listening to; electronic in Europe, American R&B/Pop music playing on the radio, and of course, Bollywood Hindi music. After getting a lot of appreciation for the music posted on my

SoundCloud page (<http://www.soundcloud.com/kanikamusic>), I decided to release my first ever single, "Is It Over Yet," to be available on all digital platforms (Spotify, Apple Music, Saavn, etc.)

Do you see yourself as a musician, a business woman, or both?

Both. Alongside my creative work as a music producer and artist, I nurtured my interest in the business aspect with the motivation to do something for the Indian music industry. A world dominated by Bollywood, it's a shame that a country of +1 billion people does not have a flourishing independent music industry like the west. This led me to beginning one of my current projects: building a creative music recording space in the heart of Mumbai. I envision this to be a co-working space for musicians; a place where both amateurs and veterans may record and edit music, collaborate and network, and especially learn or enhance their music skills. With the support of Sony and Berklee College of Music, I intend to make this a hub for international collaborations, where musicians from all over the world can come and collaborate with local, Indian talent.

As an entrepreneur, how has Jainism influenced the ventures you pursue and business practices you follow?

My family and I have recently committed to an initiative called MusicRecycle (<http://www.musicrecycle.com>), where our mission is to raise awareness for the need to recycle.

The statistics about our environment are no less than shocking, such as "At the present rate, by 2050, our oceans will have more plastic than fish."¹ My family has been working in the recycling industry for over 30 years. According to Jain scriptures, there are millions of living beings going through the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth, just like us, and deserved to be treated with respect. With this principle as our foundation, we are wholly conscious of the appalling state of our environment. What's even more worrying is that the majority of our global population does not apprehend the seriousness of the situation. There is a lack of understanding and information. The world has an unperceivable amount of materialistic "things", which we have manufactured over centuries. And the majority of these items go to waste. In fact, 91% of all the plastic ever created by humans has not been recycled.² It is simply lying in landfills or in the oceans, which leads to significantly hurting our marine life.

Through MusicRecycle, my family and I are striving to educate, influence and encourage people around the world to take note of what they buy, what they use, and how everything they do impacts the Earth.

The environmental impact plays around in every project I commit to. Whether it's the studio I am building or events I am organizing, I aim to be as eco-friendly as possible. And this circles back to the way I have been raised, as Jainism teaches us to respect and value every little thing in this world.

Can you tell us more about your recent release? What's next?

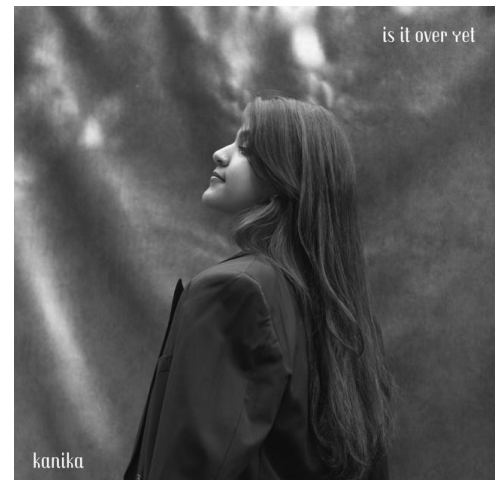
"Is It Over Yet" was released on February 1st, 2019 and has found a growing fan base all over the world. It is overwhelmingly fulfilling to see my name on these streaming platforms, which I use on a daily basis myself. The song has been added to several popular Spotify playlists and continues to grow at an exciting rate. I am now in process of putting together my second single, which will also come with a music video. After recently introducing myself to the YJP team, I have received so much support and encouragement to share my music from the group. It has shown me the importance of our strength as a community, and it's beautiful to see how willing we are to help each other out.

Kanika, you have had an overall incredible journey so far. In retrospect, is there anything you would have done differently?

I don't believe so. I think everyone is on their own journey and everything has its own timeline. Yes, I would've liked to share my music much earlier, but I believe I needed the time to grow as an artist to be true to the music. I've learned the importance of setbacks and mistakes, which only make you stronger.

What is the best piece of advice you have received that you would like to pass onto young Jain Professionals?

My father is my closest guide and mentor. Out of the many pieces of advice he has shared with me, the one thing that keeps ringing in my ear is that nothing is out of reach; nothing is impossible. If you have a goal, if you have an ambition, there is always a way to reach it if you are willing to put in the effort. I was able to prove this to myself by committing to



fasting for 8 days during Paryushan. This fast proved to me that willpower is everything, and with it, you can truly do anything.

...nothing is out of reach; nothing is impossible. If you have a goal, if you have an ambition, there is always a way to reach it if you are willing to put in the effort.

What professional development activities and / or networks have you found helpful?

I find attending women-led panels and talks very effective. Just like the Jain community, I believe there is a strong movement for women to help each other out in various industries, and music is definitely one of them.

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