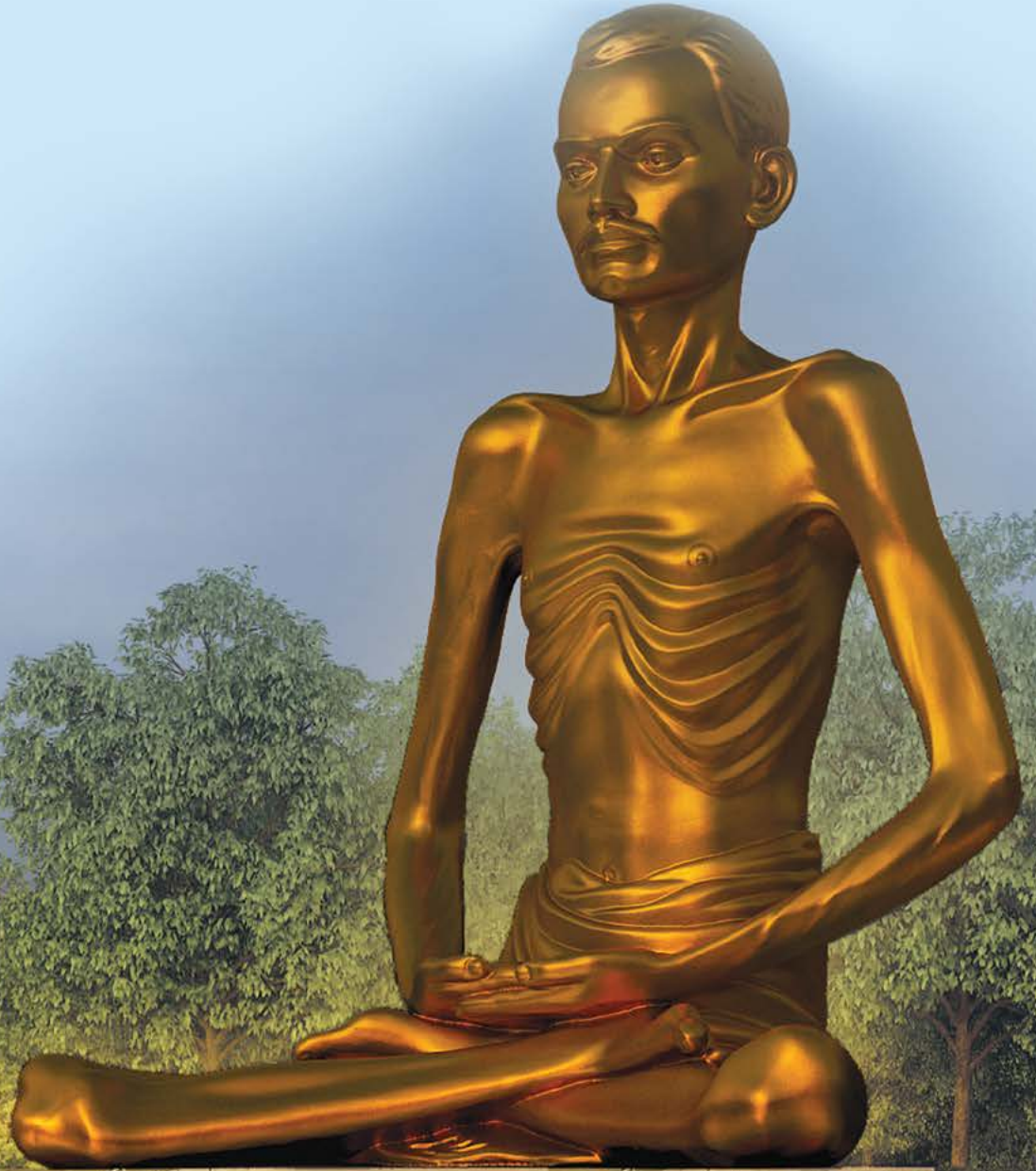


JainDigest

September 2017
Volume 6



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The world's tallest Idol of Shrimad Rajchandraji, a 34-feet majestic bronze Pratima to be unveiled on the occasion of His 150th Birth Anniversary at Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram, Dharampur

A Publication of the
Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)
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JAINA is an umbrella organization of local Jain Associations in U.S.A. and Canada. The purpose of the organization is to preserve, practice, and promote Jain Dharma and Jain Way of life.
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Disclosure

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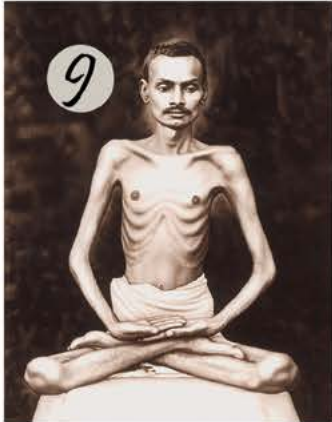


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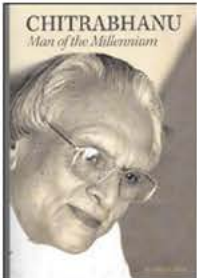
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Editor's Note



Om Shri Veetragey Namah

Jai Jinendra,

For the devotees and followers of Shrimad Rajchandraji, 2017 marks a special significance. 150 years ago, on the day of Kartik Purnima, Shrimadji was born in Vavania, Gujarat, India. To commemorate this momentous year 2017, a host of spiritual and social initiatives have been

enthusiastically undertaken by sincere devotees across the globe. "Yugpurush", the world-renowned play, with captivating representation of a special relationship between Shrimadji and Gandhiji, has been seen by more than half-a-million people in 275 cities in various countries. Honorable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi launched a commemorative coin and postage stamp honoring Shrimad Rajchandraji's 150th Birth Anniversary.

The Jain Digest Team is very pleased to join in this celebration of honoring "Shrimad Rajchandraji" by dedicating this issue of the magazine to HIS life and some of HIS literary jewels.

The article "Yugpurush – Shrimad Rajchandraji" lists important milestones in Shrimadji's life and some of HIS important letters – known as "Patranks". Mahatma Gandhi considered Shrimadji as his spiritual mentor. You can read what Gandhiji thought of Shrimadji in the article "Shrimadji – In the eyes of Gandhiji".

One of the major literary works of Shrimadji is "Atmasiddhi Shastra" which consists of 142 gathas (verses). We bring a short summary of this spiritual treatise. In order to provide you with a glimpse of the profoundness of Shrimadji's writings, we have compiled a short and a detailed discussion of gatha 129 of the Atmasiddhi Shastra.

Most aspirants start leaning about Shrimadji's teachings by reading HIS patranks originally written in Gujarati. With courtesy of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur, we bring you four such well admired patranks in English.

We sincerely hope that you find these articles interesting and educational. We thank JAINA Executive Committee for supporting the choice of Shrimad Rajchandraji as a theme for the magazine. We also thank Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai for His encouragement, guidance and allowing us to use the material published in "Sadguru Echoes" – a magazine by Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur. We apologize for any omission, misrepresentation of the material covered in this issue of Jain Digest.

We certainly hope you enjoy reading the September issue and provide us your valuable feedback by writing to us at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com.

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh

Jain Digest-Chairman's Message

Jai Jinendra,



This is the 150th birth anniversary year of Param Krupalu Dev Shrimad Rajchandraji and this issue of JAIN DIGEST is lovingly dedicated to HIM. Shrimad Rajchandraji, is one of the most adored, holiest and truest spiritual master the world has ever known. During HIS short span of life, HE achieved self-realization and showed the path

to HIS blessed devotees, one of whom was Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji was captivated by Shrimadji in spiritual and religious matters and placed HIM as foremost among those he considered to be his spiritual guides. Shrimadji's teachings about non-violence influenced Gandhiji and motivated him to achieve India's independence through non-violence.

On June 29 2017, the Honorable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modiji launched commemorative coins and a postage stamp at Gandhi Ashram in Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, India in honor of Shrimad Rajchandraji's 150th birth anniversary. This was inaugurated in presence of Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai, the founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur, India.

In addition to the articles about Shrimadji, in this issue, we also have a report on the 2017 JAINA Convention, an article about YJA Pathshala, and some highlights of the amazing work being done by JITO & JAINA.

I sincerely hope you will enjoy this edition. I would like to thank all those who have sent their donations making it possible for Jain Digest to lower the publication cost of printing and mailing to 15,000 members free of charge. I would also like to thank the members who sent emails complimenting the May 2017 publication of Jain Digest. The credit goes to the authors as well as to the Jain Digest editorial and graphic teams that contributed their valuable time and effort.

Hope everyone had a spiritually uplifting Paryushan Parva. On behalf of Jain Digest Committee, I ask for forgiveness for any misrepresentation or omission of the material while presenting it to you to the best of our knowledge, skills and ability.

Your input and suggestions on what you would like to read in the publication will help us in creating themes of interest. You may email us your articles and any information that can be shared with the JAINA Community members.

We are always looking for volunteers that are interested in contributing their time & talent in designing & content development. You may email us at Jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

Sincerely,
Mahesh Wadher



JAINA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am humbled by the faith you have put in me and given me the opportunity to serve as President of JAINA for the 2017-2019 term. I promise that I will give my best to JAINA – the organization we all love. I am pleased to work with the new Executive Committee with many young and energetic members. Almost half of the EC members are serving for the very first time – a sign that our organization is dynamic.

Our vision for the next two years is to: Reach out to the communities where there are no Jain centers and make YJA/ JAINA resources available to them; Boost JAINA's support for Academic studies of Jainism in colleges and universities, Support Women's empowerment, Provide 2 regional Jain Milan events every year; Increase support for YJA and YJP; Provide scholarships for students, Design service projects like retirement homes for first generation of Jains; Create online course of swadhyay for seniors, Update JAINA constitution, mailing list and the JAINA website. We will be working to open a JAINA office in Canada to make distribution of Jain Digest in Canada in a timely manner and donations by Canadian members to JAINA tax deductible in Canada.

I am pleased to report that the new EC has hit the ground running. In the very first month, it authorized formation of two Flood relief funds for the devastation in Gujarat and Rajasthan one by the World Community Service and the other by the Jivdaya Committee. I am happy to report that the two committees have raised more than \$55,000 and donations are still coming in. Soon they will fund worthwhile projects in the affected areas. The EC has created an ad-hock committee headed by past President Lataben Champsee to review the 2017 JAINA convention performance and make recommendations to improve the planning and execution of future conventions.

I am very proud to note some important upcoming events.

- 1) JAINA Education committee is planning to update two pathshala books: Book of Compassion and the Alphabet books. Both revised version will be published before the end of the year. October 6-8 workshop titled "Striking a Balance" - Examining Social, Cultural, and Spiritual environment that our youth face while growing up in North America.
- 2) The Pilgrimage committee is preparing for a 10 day Girnar & Palitana Panchtirthis Yatra from January 20 to January 30.
- 3) Jain Diaspora Committee is organizing a one day seminar on January 17, 2018 in Ahmedabad in cooperation with L. D. Institute on Jain Yoga.
- 4) The Calendar committee is preparing another stunning calendar for 2018. The theme of the upcoming calendar is Jain art as seen in the Temples of Ranakpur and Abu.
- 5) YJP will be hosting their Professional retreat, Part of a whole, in San Jose, California from October 27th – 29th, for more information please visit <http://tinyurl.com/Retreatyjp>
- 6) The World Community service has launched a hurricane Harvey relief fund for Houston residents.
- 7) Annual meeting of JAINA Board of Directors will be at Siddhachalam on Sept 30 and October 1.



Please go to jaina.org to get details of these programs.

Hope you have all had a spiritually uplifting Paryushan/ Das Laksana observance.

Sincerely,

Gunvant Shah



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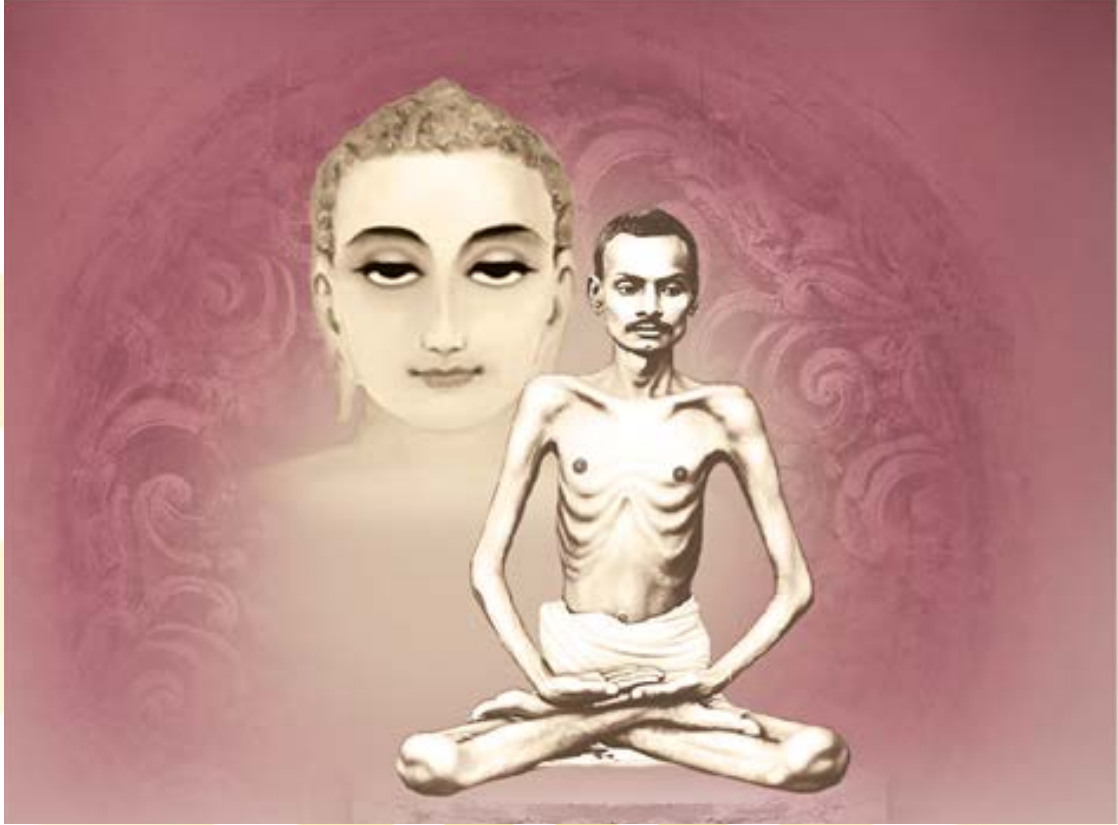
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Shrimad Rajchandraji



Shrimad Rajchandraji is highly respected for His remarkable exposition of Bhagwan Mahavira's teachings, great spiritual state, extraordinary personality and literary genius.

Shrimadji was born on the auspicious day of Kartik Purnima in V.S. 1924 (9th November, 1867) at Vavania (Gujarat, India). At the age of 23, He attained self-realization. He spent months of seclusion in jungles and mountains, absorbed in the ecstasy of the Self. His compassion for the world overflowed in the form of Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra, a masterpiece in philosophical literature. On Chaitra Vad Pancham, V.S. 1957 (9th April, 1901) at the age of 33 years, this Enlightened Soul left His mortal body, in a state of complete awareness at Rajkot.

His preachings have been compiled and published in an invaluable volume entitled 'Shrimad Rajchandra' which, even today, continues to quench the thirst of true seekers.

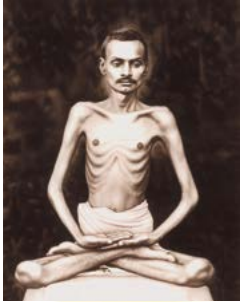
YUGPURUSH - SHRIMAD RAJCHANDRAJI

By Mahendra Khandhar



Mahendra Khandhar was the first president of Jain Center of Southern California in Los Angeles. He served on the Executive Committee for over a decade. He was instrumental in the formation of JAINA and its First Convention in LA in 1981. He taught Pathshala for 14 years and organized children's camps. He conducted Swadhyay for 18 years in LA and does it regularly in Koba (Shrimad Rajchandra Adhyatmik Sadhana Kendra, near Ahmedabad), where he spends 6 months in a year.

(Note : VS or Vikram Samvat is about 56 years ahead of AD or Christian Era. However, it is 57 years in November & December since the VS starts variably from mid-October to mid-November due to lunar calendar)



This year, 2017, Shrimad Rajchandraji's 150th Birth Anniversary is being celebrated worldwide in various ways. On this pious occasion, I would like to shed some light on the amazing life of Shrimadji and see why he has been bestowed with the title of Yugpurush (the Man of the Millennium). The purpose of this article is to make aware of Shrimadji to those who are unfamiliar and to instill reverence in those who are familiar. It is also the objective to expose Shrimad Rajchandraji's greatness, spiritually (mainly) and worldly. He was the great Indian saint, poet-philosopher and spiritual luminary.

Let us briefly look at the milestones in Shrimad Rajchandraji's life :

- (1) VS 1924 (9 Nov 1867) : He was born on the auspicious day of Kartiki Poonam in Vavania (35 km from Morbi, Gujarat). This is also the birthday of Sambhavnath Bhagwan (Janma Kalyanak) and Hemchandracharya. He was about 2 years older than Gandhiji (born on 2 Oct 1869). His father Ravjibhai Mehta followed Hinduism (Vaishnav) and mother Devba followed Jainism.
- (2) VS 1931 (AD 1875) : At the age of 7, while looking at the burning pyre of the neighbor Amichandbhai's dead body, he had deep thinking (churning) of life, death & soul, resulting in remembrance of hundreds of his previous lives, due to purity of his soul and dispassion (Vairagya) from the earlier lives. Later, while visiting Junagadh Fort and Idar mountains, he recalled further up to 900 previous lives.
- (3) VS 1934 (AD 1878) : At the age of 10, he wrote 'PushpaMala' (Garland of Flowers), a collection of 108 short but great sayings. Mahatma Gandhi called it the proof of reincarnation because no one could write such scholarly spiritual gems at the very young age of 10. With the astonishing memory & grasping power he finished 7-year schooling in 2 years.
- (4) VS 1940 (AD 1884) : At the young age of about 16 ½ years, he wrote the scripture-like 'MokshaMala' in 3 days, a collection of 108 Lessons in simple Gujarati, each ½ to 1 page, encompassing all 4 styles (Anuyog) and comprising 27 stories, 8 poems, various useful topics and philosophy, appropriate for young & old alike. He explained the preaching of Tirthankars in simple lucid language. In a new aspirant, reading 'MokshMala' develops aptitude towards spirituality and sows the seed of Jainism. Shrimadji started Avdhans – ability to tend several activities simultaneously – based on extra ordinary memory and unimaginable superhuman powers of the soul. He did 8, 12, 16 & 52 Avdhans in various cities. He was called Hero of India, Goddess of Knowledge in persona, etc.
- (5) VS 1942 (AD 1886) : Shrimad's internal dispassion was increasing by leaps. At this elevated level, he wrote the booklet 'Bhavna Bodh', describing the 12 contemplations (Anupreksha).



- (6) VS 1943 (22 Jan 1887) : At the age of 19, he performed 100 Avdhans in Mumbai in public, attended by many VIPs including the English Judge of Bombay High Court. His fame spread like a wild fire and was invited to visit UK & Europe to exhibit his extra ordinary feat. He politely declined.
- (7) VS 1944 (AD 1888) : Following the fruition of his previous Karmas, he married to Zabakben. At the same time he continued his introspection and decided to give up his super human powers of Avdhan, astrology and Samudric Vidya, considering them as hindrance to his spiritual progress.



(8) VS 1945 (AD 1889) : Because of his family's financial situation, he started jewelry business in Mumbai, in partnership with his in-laws. The business grew well.



Sobhagbhai



Lalluji Muni



Ambalalbhai



Juthabhai

(9) VS 1946 (AD 1890) : Around this time, he came across 4 wonderful people who became his close personal followers.

(1) Sobhagbhai of Sayla, 44 years senior, contact for 7 years, inspirational figure, whom Shrimadji wrote 244 letters.

(2) Lalluji Muni (Prabhu Shri), 14 years senior and lived 35 years after Shrimadji's death, established Agas Ashram, whom Shrimadji wrote 92 letters.

(3) Ambalalbhai, 2 years junior and served as personal assistant and lived 6 years after Shrimadji, whom Shrimadji wrote 126 letters.

(4) Juthabhai, 1 year senior, contact lasted only 2 years due to Juthabhai's death at the age of 23, whom Shrimadji wrote 20 letters.

(10) VS 1947 (AD 1891) : This was the year when Shrimadji achieved Self-Realization in which he experienced his real pure soul. That drastically changed his outlook of life & world. He gave up all of his superhuman powers. Barrister Mohandas Gandhi met Shrimadji first time (6 July 1891) and was very impressed. They were in personal contact for 2 years in Mumbai and then another 8 years through correspondence.

(11) VS 1950 (AD 1894) : At the request of Lalluji Muni, Shrimadji wrote him the famous letter (# 493) of 6-Fundamentals, which later formed the basis of Atmasiddhi Shastra.



(12) VS 1951 (AD 1895) : At the height of his detachment, Shrimadji decided to renounce everything and become a monk. However, his mother Devba did not give him permission because of motherly love. Then Shrimadji started spending many months in seclusion in the mountains & jungles of Gujarat to nurture his elevated inner state of soul.

(13) VS 1952 (AD 1896) : At the request of Sobhagbhai, Shrimadji wrote the magnum opus scripture 'Atmasiddhi' of 142 stanzas in less than 2 hours at one sitting, in Nadiad on Thursday Aso Vad 1 (22 Oct 1896). It is the essence of all

6 Indian Aryan spiritual philosophies. Padma Bhushan Pandit Sukhlalji gave it the highest praise.

(14) VS 1953 (AD 1897) : Shrimadji helped Sobhagbhai achieve Self-Realization in Idar.

(15) VS 1954 (AD 1898) : Shrimadji helped Lalluji Muni achieve Self-Realization in Vaso.

(16) VS 1955 (AD 1899) : Shrimadji retired from the jewelry business in Mumbai. Publicly he renounced for life the fundamental distractions in spiritual progress : wealth & women (including his wife).

(17) VS 1956 (AD 1900) : Shrimadji became ill and his stomach sickness got worse. He went to several places for change of climate, but his health continued to deteriorate. In Wadhwan Camp (now Surendranagar in Gujarat), at the request of many followers, Shrimadji allowed to have his 2 photographs which are inspiring all the aspirants across the globe, even now.

(18) VS 1957 (AD 2001) : In spite of best medical treatment then-available and all the prayers, Shrimadji left his mortal body on Tuesday Chaitra Vad 5 (9 April 2001) in Rajkot (Gujarat) at 2 pm after 5 hours of meditation and completely immersed in his soul. Such a great soul lived only about 33 ½ years, similar to Swami Vivekanand and Shankaracharya.

In summary, Shrimadji's life may be looked upon as 4 distinct spiritual stages :

(1) VS 1924-1941 (AD 1867-1885): up to age 18, introspection & contemplation.

(2) VS 1942-1946 (AD 1886-1890): age 19-23, study of Jain scriptures & inclination toward Vitrag (detachment) Darshan (philosophy).

(3) VS 1947-1951 (AD 1891-1895): age 24-27, Self-Realization, true knowledge, elevating his internal state by progressive renunciation.

(4) VS 1952-1957 (AD 1896-1901): nurturing his elevated state through soul-searching & cleansing, solitary meditation in desolated forests & mountains.

Even in his short life of about 33 years, Shrimad Rajchandraji left considerable spiritual literature : about 955 letters, notes of his preaching, personal diary of his internal thought processes, 3 scripture-like epic compositions of PushpaMala, MokshaMala & Atmasiddhi and many excellent spiritual poems : Apurva Avasar (Unprecedented Occasion), Mul Marag (basic path), Bahu Punya Kera Punjathi (result of many good deed/Karmas), Bhaktina 20 Dohra (Sadguru Bhakti), Anant Anant Bhav Bhedthi (Jin Vani – infinite thoughts-types-reflections), Jad-Chetan (nature of living & non-living), etc. His letters are very relevant to us worldly householder aspirants because most of those letters are written to householder aspirants by Shrimadji – himself living as a householder. His writings are consistent, to the point, soul-centered, experiential, without any ulterior motive and written in simple language - emphasizing Satsang (spiritual assembly) and Sadguru (spiritual guide). He was a literary genius.

Shrimadji's teachings from his letters are compiled in a book titled "Shrimad Rajchandra", popularly known as Vachanamrut. Each letter has been given a number and is called "Patrank". Below is a list of some of the most important letters and their topics.

Patrank # 37: Getting rid of Attachments and Aversions is the real religious practice

Patrank # 40: Aspirant's qualifications - broad mindedness, neutrality, straightforwardness, conquering of the senses

Patrank # 48: Morality in daily life & work place

Patrank # 76, 80: Characteristics of Sadguru

Patrank # 105: Ten commandments of Bhagwan Mahavir-qualifications of an aspirant

Patrank # 128: Repentance

Patrank # 135: 5 Attributes of Samyak Darshan - Subdued passions, strong desire for liberation, detachment from the worldly affairs, compassion and faith

Patrank # 172: 7 fold path of devotion

Patrank # 200: 14 fold path of knowledge

Patrank # 254: Definition of an aspirant and progression on the path

Patrank # 301: The art of living - look at everybody as souls, do not look at others' faults, accept peacefully whatever happens, live with your virtues without ego

Patrank # 436: 4 bowings to Tirthankar Bhagwan & His preaching

Patrank # 437: 7 characteristics of the soul

Patrank # 493: 6 Fundamentals - Soul exists, It is eternal, It is doer of its Karma, It bears consequences of the Karma, Liberation is possible, There are means to achieve liberation.

Patrank # 506: Dispassion (Vairagya) and subdued passions (Upsham)

Patrank # 530: Answers to Gandhiji's 27 questions

Patrank # 569: The means to overcome all miseries is Self-Knowledge

Patrank # 609: Satsang : Definition, process, pitfalls, solution (also MokshaMala Lesson-24)

Patrank # 692: Rare human birth

Patrank # 751: 3-types of Samkit

Patrank # 954: Final Message – our soul is similar to Bhagwan, except for delusion and options



Gandhiji was a great soul who recognized and valued the virtues of Shrimadji. During his 2 years of personal contact with Shrimadji in Mumbai (during AD 1891-1893), he became very close and learned many things from him, including the true perspective of life and soul. Shrimadji's inner equipoise, absorption in spiritual pursuit, enlightening wisdom, knowledge of the scriptures and moral earnestness left a deep impression on Gandhiji. During the following 8 years (AD 1894-1901), he communicated by regular letters – hundreds of them. In one letter, Gandhiji asked him 27 questions relating to life, duty, knowledge, liberation and God.

Shrimadji gave clear logical satisfactory answers. During the trying situation in his life, when Gandhiji was confused about religion and was in spiritual dilemma, he wrote to many religious leaders and others in India for guidance. From all those, only Shrimadji replied and guided him without trying to convert him to Jainism. It strengthened Gandhiji's

faith in Hinduism and Indian Aryan culture. Gandhiji learned about truth, non-violence, compassion, righteousness, celibacy, simplicity, austerity, secularity, dispassion and eternity of soul from Shrimadji. Gandhiji imbibed those virtues, along with upholding truth with fearlessness, in his life by experiment, during the freedom struggle of India. That is when he started abhorring untouchability. It molded Mohandas Gandhi into Mahatma Gandhi. In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi has dedicated a whole chapter to Shrimadji, acknowledging his contribution in the early development of his (Gandhiji's) life. Gandhiji even said that Shrimadji was the most influential person in his life and that he learned much from Shrimadji. From that perspective, Shrimadji contributed indirectly and fundamentally to the nonviolent – non cooperative freedom struggle of India. 'Yugpurush – Mahatma na Mahatma' drama depicts the relationship between Gandhiji & Shrimadji. Shrimad Rajchandraji had a tremendous and formative influence on Gandhiji - the Father of the Nation.

Respected public figures like Vinobaji, Kaka Kalelkar, Pujya PunyaVijayji Maharaj, Pujya Santbalji, Pujya Kanji Swami, Pragnachakshu Pandit Sukhlalji, Mahatma Gandhi and others called Shrimadji by various virtual names, e.g. India's Spiritual Light, Millennium Great, Knowledge Incarnate, Visionary, Experimentation Hero, Life Long Penanced, Religion Personified, Supreme Fundamentalist, Top Auspicious Person, Spirituality in Persona, etc.

Shrimad Rajchandraji had many super human abilities, e.g. extra ordinary memory, extrasensory powers, instant poetry, know the book by simply touching, predict a person's future event(s), unusual grasping power and simultaneous attention to tens & hundreds of activities (Avdhans). All of these are the result of his good Karmas (Punya) from earlier lives. It is indeed commendable. However he is called the Man of Millennium (Yugpurush) not because of these super human abilities, but because of the following :

- 1) Complete internal dispassion while living as a householder's life. He lived in a body but detached from it.
- 2) He gave up fame & wealth of Avdhan & future predictions.
- 3) He was the last disciple of Bhagwan Mahavir & explained His preaching (Jin Vani) in simple language & practical way.
- 4) He explained & emphasized the fundamental 2 pillars of spirituality, e.g. Sadguru & Satsang as never before.
- 5) He molded Mohandas Gandhi into world leader Mahatma Gandhi, who achieved India's freedom and showed the path of non-violent freedom movement to the world.
- 6) Mahatma Gandhiji said Shrimadji was the greatest Indian at that time.
- 7) He was instrumental in Self-Realization of many of his followers.
- 8) He lived as a detached householder with simplicity & integrity and showed compassion for all.
- 9) In all his endeavors, he kept soul in the center.
- 10) He was truly a friend-philosopher & guide to all aspirants of all age and all eras. He will remain spiritually inspiring to millions in the world.

Shrimadji never established his own sect, group or Ashram. Being a householder, he never preached in public. He always followed and emphasized Bhagwan Mahavir, His Agna and His scriptures. He simplified the Path of Liberation and explained in accordance with time & place. His writings are based on his own experience and it is experiential. Shrimadji explained true happiness as bliss of soul and described the means to achieve it. He synergistically combined worldly externality & internal spirituality. His own internal purity of soul was extremely high and it is believed that he will achieve liberation after next life. His greatest contribution was to rise above the petty differences (of various sects of Jainism) and emphasize Sadguru-Satsang with the mystical secret of true devotion.

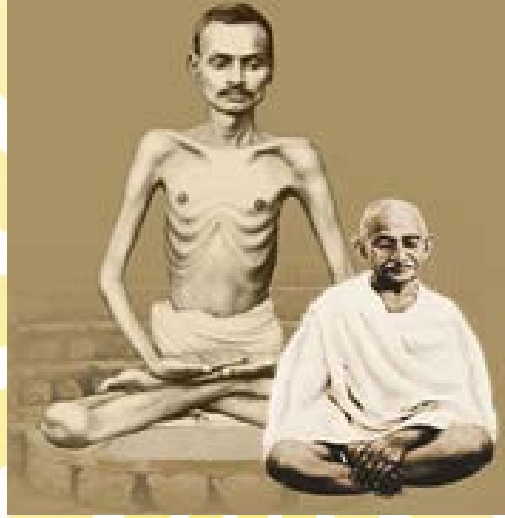
Shrimadji's life was transparent, pious, reflection of his constant awareness of soul and the mirror of Jain Philosophy. His life & writings have transformed many lives towards true religiosity & spirituality. He was a great philosopher, living in a body but not living as a body. He was a divine friend of all aspirants. His very existence was pure and helpful to all. He lived with awareness & without any illusion. His writings show originality, thoughtfulness and detachment flows from it. Shrimadji means an invitation to become introvert, lamp of knowledge, destroyer of darkness of ignorance, divine vibrations of self-realization and sound of liberation. The greatest monument to Shrimad Rajchandraji is to follow his message and realize our own Self, leading to Liberation. Special commemorative stamp and coins were issued by the Government of India in the presence of Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pujya Gurudev Rakeshbhai. Shrimadji is not a mortal person, but a phenomenon. He is divinity personified. It was great fortune of Gujarat (and India) to have produced 2 Yugpurush, Mahatma Gandhi & Shrimad Rajchandraji, about the same time. They brought revolution and made history. We bow to both with gratefulness and reverence.

Shrimadji – In the Eyes of Gandhiji

By Dr. Bharatbhai Shah

(Reprinted from April 2011 issue of “Sadguru Echoes” magazine)

The personal relationship of Shrimadji and his contemporary Mahatma Gandhiji, is a bright chapter not only in their personal lives, not only for the state of Gujarat, but for the cultural, political and spiritual history of the whole of India. Gandhiji's herculean and countrywide efforts in freeing the nation from slavery by fighting on the principles of non-violence and truth, resulting in the attainment of freedom - represent an unprecedented victory of non-violence, self-restraint and austerities in the history of mankind. It was his association with Shrimadji and the wise counsel provided by Him on the principles of truth and non-violence, which formed the cornerstone of this great man's life.



In his autobiography, the chapters on 'Raychandbhai', 'Dharmik Manthan', 'Dharma-Nirikshan' and 'Brahmacharya'; and his other writings and lectures on Shrimadji reflect Gandhiji's faith in Him. Shri Revashanker Jagjivanbhai had requested Gandhiji to write a preface of the book, 'Shrimad Rajchandra', second edition, published in V.S. 1982, under the auspices of 'Paramshrut Prabhavak Mandal'. Gandhiji accepted his request; completed the last chapter on some of the memoirs of Shrimadji that he had previously written in the Yervada jail, added other material to it, and prepared an article entitled, 'Raychandbhaina Ketlak Smarano'. In this, he has heaped a lot of praise on Shrimadji.

Here are some excerpts:

I was introduced to Raychandbhai in July 1891, on the very day on which, returning from England, I landed in Bombay. At this time of the year the sea is stormy. The ship, therefore, had arrived late and it was already night. I stayed with Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, Barrister, now the well-known jeweler of Rangoon. Raychandbhai was his elder brother's son-in-law. The doctor himself introduced me to him. On the same day I was also introduced to Jhaveri Revashanker Jagjivandas,

One rare feature of his writings is that he always set down what he had felt in his own experience. There is in them no trace of unreality. I have never read any line by him which was written to produce an effect on others

another elder brother of his. The doctor introduced Raychandbhai as 'a poet', and added, "though a poet, he is in our business. He is a man of spiritual knowledge and a shatavadhani (One who can pay attention to a hundred things simultaneously)". Someone suggested that I should utter a number of words in his presence, saying that no matter to what language they belonged he would repeat them in the same order in which I had uttered them. I could not believe this. I was a young man, had just returned from England, and was a little vain, too, of my knowledge of languages; in those days I was under the powerful spell of English. Having been to England made a man feel that he was heaven-born. I poured out all my store of knowledge, and first wrote out words from different languages

- for how possibly could I afterwards remember them in their due order? I then read out the words. Raychandbhai repeated them slowly one after another and in the same order. I was pleased and astonished, and formed a high opinion about his memory. This was an excellent experience to break a little the binding spell of English on me.

The poet did not know English at all. At the time I am speaking of, he was not more than twenty-five. His study in the Gujarati school was not much either. And even then he possessed such a powerful memory and such knowledge, and was respected by everyone around him! I was all admiration. The power of memory is not sold in schools. Knowledge, too, can be acquired without going to school if one wants it - is keen on it - and one need not go to England or elsewhere to command respect, for virtue is always respected. I learned these truths on the very day I landed in Bombay. The acquaintance with the poet which began on this occasion grew over the years.

One rare feature of his writings is that he always set down

what he had felt in his own experience. There is in them no trace of unreality. I have never read any line by him which was written to produce an effect on others. He had always by his side a book on some religious subject and a notebook with blank pages. The latter he used for noting down any thoughts which occurred to him. Sometimes, it would be prose and sometimes poetry. The poem about the 'supreme state' must have been written in that manner.

Whatever he was doing at the moment, whether eating or resting or lying in bed, he was invariably disinterested towards things of the world. I never saw him being tempted by objects of pleasure or luxury in this world.

I watched his daily life respectfully, and at close quarters. He used to walk slowly, and the passer-by could see that he was absorbed in thought even while walking. There was a strange power in his eyes; they were extremely bright, and free from any sign of impatience or anxiety. They bespoke single-minded attention. The face was round, the lips thin, the nose neither pointed nor flat and the body of

light build and medium size. The skin was dark. He looked an embodiment of peace. There was such sweetness in his voice that one simply wanted to go on listening to him.

The face was smiling and cheerful; it shone with the light of inner joy. He had such ready command of language that I do not remember his ever pausing for a word to express his thoughts. I rarely saw him changing a word while writing a letter. And yet the reader would never feel that any thought was imperfectly expressed, or the construction of a sentence was defective or the choice of a word faulty.

"Whatever he was doing at the moment, whether eating or resting or lying in bed, he was invariably disinterested towards things of the world. I never saw him being tempted by objects of pleasure or luxury in this world"

These qualities can exist only in a man of self-control. A man cannot become free from attachments by making a show of being so. That state is a state of grace for the atman. Anyone who strives for it will discover that it may be won only after a ceaseless effort through many lives. One will discover, if one struggles to get rid of attachments, how difficult it is to succeed in the attempt. The Poet made me feel that this state of freedom from attachment was spontaneous to him.



Shrimad Rajchandraji's "Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra"

By Hema Pokharna, PhD



(Dr. Hema Pokharna is a Certified Nonviolent Communication (NVC) Trainer. As an Executive Coach and Consultant she works with leaders and their teams to improve personal and organizational collaborative leadership. Hema is also an interfaith peacemaker and mediator, and has served on the board of Parliament of World Religions, Play for peace and presently serves on the board of Council of Religious Leaders of Chicago and also on JSMC and the JAINA Interfaith Committee.
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The Enlightened Ones, through their aura, unparalleled discourses and personal guidance have transformed many a soul.

Shrimad Rajchandraji was an Enlightened One who guided many seekers on their spiritual journey and led them to divine experiences. It was an outpouring of His great spiritual elevation and compassion that He left behind a timeless masterpiece a legacy for future generations. He composed the "Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra" in just one and a half hours at Nadiad in the state of Gujarat, in 1896. It is a rare jewel in the form of a concise scripture that enables seekers to gain complete clarity on their spiritual journey and helps them turn inwards for true happiness, perfection and freedom from pain and misery.

Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra is a philosophical composition of 142 verses that explains the fundamental philosophical truths about the soul and its liberation. It is the quintessence of the six fundamental philosophies, including Jain philosophy, prevalent at the time, and that too, in simple Gujarati language. It is said that Shrimadji was able to look back upon some 900 previous births and that Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra is the philosophical essence of this vast experience. This is a momentous and heartfelt aspiration to each one of us that there can and does exist a successful, universally oriented way of life. It is a wakeup call for us to break the habitual presumptions and sluggishness, apathy and neglect and live a life of discipline and develop observance-building capacity to make the invisible visible.



Shrimadji's personal experience and unbound enthusiasm brilliantly proves that the invigorating connection with the soul is an eminently practical path which has immediate repercussions on one's thoughts and behavior. Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra lets us consider the do's and don'ts to stave off the stampede of karma and lead to the liberation of the incarcerated soul in this life. Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra is an invitation to live beyond the edge of the comforts of body, power, and prestige.

The most repeated word in this compilation is Jiva-the being. Independent of gender, this invites all to explore, experiment and experience their true identity as a soul, independent of the body. This makes the journey of self-realization universal, irrespective of caste, creed, gender and nation. Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra emphasizes the exquisite universality of the soul and gives us an insight on how to overcome the obstacles and temptations on the path of the search of the soul.

Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra is a well-laid path, with each stanza merging into to the next, leading to a clear and concrete conclusion of attaining self-realization. The bird's eye view of the path covers every area of the seeker's quest. Each word in the poem makes us experience the joy and delightfulness of a compassionate heart. It is contagiously meaningful to the point of action, as if we are on a search for that which we have already discovered. Showing us that we have the power to reverse the eons of cycles of misery, it provides a pathway for those who aspire for freedom from all miseries and revel in the bliss of the soul.



The poem sets out very methodically describing the container (body) inhabited by the Atma or soul (Self) which falsely identifies itself with the container instead of its own self-awareness, thus creating a world of contradiction and pain.

Atmasiddhi has 10 distinct sections with the underlying theme of self-connection and interdependent relationship with a guru. Each section is further elaborated in detail making clear the possibilities and pitfalls at any given stage. This composition has been a source of wise guidance for millions to understand how an ancient philosophy can be a beacon to flourish in complex modernity, making Jainism practical and contemporary.

Part I-The Necessity of Self Knowledge (Verses 1-8): Begins with paying obeisance to the Sadguru and giving two main reasons for the path to liberation being forgotten at present, namely performing rituals without the knowing why they are done, and having dogmatic knowledge and denying the necessity of rituals.

Part II-The Quality of A Good Teacher (Verse 9-13) These verses cover the qualities of a true Sadguru, the absolute necessity of a living Master and the kind of scriptures to follow in the absence of such a Sadguru.

Part III-The Duties of A Pupil (Verse 14-22)

The verses here examines closely the essentials of a Guru-Disciple relationship, characterizes the details of what connects the student to the guru. Also establishes guidelines for the student to follow to add speed and ease to the journey.

Part IV-The Characteristics of a Vain Pupil (Verse 23-33)

Without negating any faith, Shrimadji is reprimanding of stubborn and headstrong pupil insistence on unilateral thinking. He alerts the dogmatists and fundamentalists not to use religion for their selfish ends.

Part V-The Characteristics of a True Pupil (Verse 34-41)

Here Shrimadji elaborates on the persona of a true Master, emphasizing the necessity of self-realization in Him; as well the qualities required in a true pupil with head and heart integration while performing his duties.

Part VI-An Introduction to and a Debate on the Six Propositions (Verse 42-107) This is the most exciting and interesting part of Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra. Here Shrimadji has taken a plot where a disciple in search of Self is in a quandary as to which path to follow for attaining the goal. The disciple engages the Guru in a dialogue, through which all the doubts in his mind are clarified. It is here that Shrimadji provides responses that are clear, precise solutions to seekers' questions. The responses empower the seeker to move ahead on the path.

Shrimadji enunciates the six fundamental truths in this part. He calls them as six spiritual steps:

- Self (soul) exists
- It is eternal
- It is the doer of its own karmas
- It is the enjoyer or the sufferer of its karmas
- Liberation (salvation) is possible
- There are means to achieve liberation

Part VII- The Steps of progression of a true seeker (108-118)

These verses elucidate the steps that a true seeker goes through as he progresses towards self-realization.

Part VIII- The attainment of self-realization (Verse 119-123) These verses express the state of a seeker who has now attained self-realization.

Part IX- The Seeker's Gratitude (124-127) This part is an expressions of the gratitude of the seeker towards his Sadguru, who is instrumental in his attaining self-realisation.

Part X- The Conclusion (Verse 128-142)

In closing once again Shrimadji is urging the reader to understand that self-realization is meant for everyone irrespective of cast, creed, gender and nation. Encouraging all to embark the path, He reassures all that these guidelines will empower each one to become the guardian of one's own spiritual progress.

To those who aspire for the happiness of the Soul, Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra will be like sky to the birds, water to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, a boat to the drowning, medicine to the sick, and a guide to the lost ones in the woods.

- References:**
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Conquering Self-delusion through Contemplation and Meditation (Based on Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra: Gatha 129)

Compiled by Reena Shah, Ramesh Khandhar, Anop Vora and Dilip Parekh

(Editor's Note: Each of the 142 verses (gathas) of Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra consists of profound philosophical statements that the seekers need to contemplate upon for their spiritual growth. In this article, we have chosen to explore the meaning of gatha 129 since its simplicity and depth easily resonates with all readers. The four segments of this verse are explained briefly in the "Summary" section, followed by more in-depth discussion in the "Detailed Analysis" section. We hope this gives our readers an insight in to the profoundness of Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra and the depth of Shrimadji's knowledge in general.)

Gatha 129 :

आत्मभ्रान्ति सम रोग नही , सदगुरु वैद्य सुजाण
गुरुआज्ञा सम पथ्य नही , औषध विचार ध्यान
*Ātmabhrānti Sam Rog Nahi, Sadguru Vaidya Sujān;
Guruājñā Sam Pathya Nahi, Aushadh Vichār Dhyān*

Meaning: There are four segments in this gatha. (1) There is no disease like self-delusion (2) A true Guru is an expert spiritual physician (3) There is no cure like the precepts of the Guru (4) Contemplation and meditation comprise the medication.

Summary: This Gatha is a precious jewel. It is the essence of the spiritual science. The four segments of the Gatha contain the valuable statements that need to be remembered by everyone, especially the aspirants. In this gatha, Shrimadji talks about this deadly disease Ātmabhrānti which is a result of wrong beliefs (Mithyatva). He describes the cure for this disease in his remarkable use of language. While emphasizing the importance of cure and the doctor for this disease, he sings the glory of cultivating right beliefs (Samyaktva).

The first segment refers to Ātmabhrānti, which means the delusion prevailing about the Self. Due to ignorance of the true Self we stay deluded about our own nature. Forsaking the soul we identify ourselves with the body and its surroundings. As such, we indulge in attachment for some aspects and resentment towards others. This delusion, that "I am the body", is the main disease. This delusion about the Self has been prevailing since the time immemorial and has been continuing birth after birth. Moreover, we are not even aware of this disease, and therefore do not resort to the means for curing the same. As such, it is the most chronic disease.



When we have a fever, we may try taking Tylenol. If the fever does not reduce, we consult with a doctor who will do the right kind of investigation to diagnose the ailment and prescribe appropriate medication. Sometimes several people show the same symptoms but only an expert doctor will be able to diagnose the kind of illness each one has and might prescribe different medication to each one of them. This takes us to the question of how can we find a "physician" for the disease of delusion?

The reply is provided in the second segment of the gatha which states that a Sadguru is the expert spiritual physician. The Guru has not obtained that expertise by just reading or from other external sources. That expertise comes from within. Sadguru himself was infected with atmabhranti before becoming a self-realized soul. He had suffered from the pain of atmabhranti. To cure himself, he assimilated the teachings, dived deep within and attained the cure for atmabhranti. Since he has experienced the disease-free state too, he can guide us properly. He is therefore the most reliable physician for curing us of the disease.

When a physician starts the treatment, he/she may also advise the patient to follow other instructions, in addition to the medication which can help in bringing the disease under control. These instructions may be about exercise, restricted

diet, physical therapy, etc. The third segment of the gatha states that the precepts of a Guru which may consist of behavioral and attitudinal changes in controlling the disease of delusion. For instance, a diabetic patient is advised to reduce or avoid sugar and fats by avoiding certain foods, do exercise and walking in addition to medication. Similarly, in spirituality, a Sadguru is considered a “Sujaan Vaidya” who has the capability to know our spiritual level, understand our intellectual, emotional states and provide us with customized guidance in order to get rid of the atmabhranti.

The fourth segment of the gatha prescribes the medicine to cure oneself of atmabhranti. Contemplating over the nature of soul and meditating on the same constitute the medication to overcome the disease. Curing the disease of wrong belief requires real transformation in our thinking and our understanding about the Self so that our belief system changes. Hence, Shrimadji has prescribed contemplation (Dharma Dhyana) as one of the medicines to cure atmabhranti.

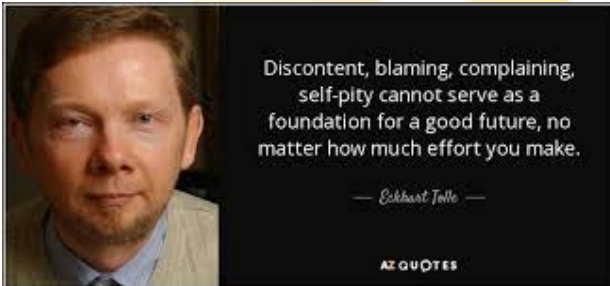
While contemplation requires active involvement of the mind in order to intellectually get an understanding of the nature of the soul, the real experience of “I am a soul” requires gradually less active - and eventually inactive - mind; which can be achieved through meditation. Hence both contemplation and meditation are important ‘medicines’ in the process of spiritual transformation. Since the Guru knows where we are in our spiritual development, it is important to seek his guidance in taking the right amount of such medicines.

Detailed Analysis:

Shrimad Rajchandraji tells us that there is no disease like Atmabhranti and we are all suffering from it. But how do we know that we have this disease? Let us explore this. All of us want to be happy. Happiness is, along with love, peace and wholeness, our deepest longing. In most cases, our idea of happiness is tied to external things such as success, money, power, health and relationships. Unfortunately, these are all non-self items (‘par’) and keep us away from our soul (‘swa’).

However, even with all such material things, people are still unhappy and miserable from within because none of these external factors are everlasting. Such happiness is dependent upon certain things being the way we want them to be and hence when any unfavorable incident occurs, the happiness disappears! After some introspection, we will realize that we are creating our own unhappiness. Blaming others, comparing, complaining, getting angry at small things, getting depressed, has become our habit. And these are the symptoms of our disease – Atmabhranti.

What is Delusion (Atmabhranti)?



The pursuit of material happiness is grounded in the belief that ‘I am the body’ and hence everything associated with the body – family, relatives, friends and all material things necessary for the livelihood - as ‘mine’. This wrong belief – me and mine - is the ‘delusion’ and it is the root cause of all unhappiness, suffering and endless cycles of birth and death. ‘Atmabhranti’ means totally forgetting the pure intrinsic nature of the True Self and staying absorbed in body-related associations with people and material objects. The by-products of this behavior are wrong beliefs, prejudices, faulty concepts, and ill-conceived perceptions. They all act as obstructions in realizing the real attributes of the True Self.

This delusion creates a strong desire for external objects associated with pleasure related to five senses. The desire (attachment) acts as a glue to bond karma and soul together. The yearning for material wealth can never be fulfilled. The more we get, the more we want to have! Such greed causes more karmic bondage leading to more misery and suffering. Despite all the efforts, we fail to derive true happiness and bliss. At certain point in life one gets tired of misery and unhappiness. One starts doubting the false identity associated with the impermanent body. This sets up the stage for spiritual up-lifting, leading one to study the true nature of the soul.

Some of the attributes of a soul are Knowledge, Perception, Bliss, Spiritual Energy, etc. The soul is fully conscious, formless, all knowing and all perceiving substance. The intrinsic property/attribute of soul which separates it from all other non-living substances is ‘sva-par prakashak’ (gnata-drashta) attribute, that is, its ability to know itself and all other substances (and its modes) of entire universe when the attributes are fully manifested. We ignorantly believe that the name, form



and everything associated with the body is our true identity. This is delusion, the root cause of all misery, suffering, unhappiness, anxiety and restless wandering attitude. Three main reasons for delusion are: (1) Our ignorance about the true nature of the soul (2) Limitation of our knowledge about the world around us gained through our five senses and mind (3) Our intimacy with the body from time immemorial. Such delusion leads our inclination towards the external objects associated with sensual pleasures.

Cause-effect relationship

Science has proved what Lord Mahavira said 2600 years ago that cause and effect are related and that cause gives rise to effect. In fact, the cause is transformed into effect sometime in the future. The universal law is: “where ever there is a cause, there will be corresponding effect in future and where ever there is an effect, there must have been a corresponding cause in the past”. The following table outlines the cause-effect relationship which leads to misery, suffering and unhappiness.

CAUSE	➔	EFFECT
Ignorance about the True Nature of Soul	➔	Delusion (Atmabhranti)
Delusion	➔	Wrong Beliefs
Wrong Beliefs	➔	Attachment and Aversion towards External Objects
Attachment and Aversion towards External Objects	➔	Desires, Anger, Pride, Deceit and Greed, auxiliary passions (No-kashayas)
Desires, Anger, Pride, Deceit and Greed, auxiliary passions	➔	Karmic Bondage
Fruition of Karma	➔	Misery, Suffering, Cycles of Birth and Death
Reaction arising out of misery and suffering	➔	New Karmic Bondage

The vicious cycle continues forever or until the wrong beliefs are transformed into right beliefs that will lead to self-realization.

Need of a Sadguru to get cured from Atmabhranti

Once we realize that we are suffering from the disease of atmabhranti, the obvious question is, is this a curable disease? There are three kinds of diseases: one which is easily curable (su saadhya) by doing some treatment, second is the one which gets cured after a long treatment (kasht-saadhya), and third is the one that cannot be cured or treated (asaadhya). Atmabhranti falls under the second category which is kashta saadhya and takes long time to be cured.

When the disease is easily curable, we may try some home remedies or take some treatment advice from family and friends. However, when we understand that the disease is life threatening, we will go a doctor that is expert in that field. Hence, once we realize that Atmabhranti is detrimental to our spiritual well-being, we need to seek help from someone that is expert in spiritual practice – a Sadguru. We should not try for any ‘cures’ on our own.



We must reflect upon the following spiritual insights and then seek guidance from spiritual master for diagnosis:

1. First and foremost requirement is to recognize that despite performing all religious rituals, one has not attained or realized his true identity that could transform all misery and suffering into everlasting bliss and happiness. In essence, one must acknowledge that ‘I do not know the Path’.
2. One must be tired of painful misery and suffering from endless cycles of birth and death (nirved).
3. One must check if he has a true desire from within to know and realize the true identity of self (samveg).
4. One must realize that either he is not performing the religious rituals properly and/or that his beliefs about the nature and attributes of self are wrong. Are the rituals being performed mechanically without understanding its purpose and/or without a specific goal? Is he performing rituals with a desire for name, fame, recognition and material wealth?
5. One must check if he has he failed or ignored to study and understand the innate nature of the True Self.

These insights are difficult to comprehend requiring guidance from a Sadguru instead of us struggling to seek answers on our own - due to the limitations of our knowledge and understanding. The master has walked the Path successfully and therefore Sadguru will be able to figure out the missteps disciple has been making and guide him properly.

How do we find such a Sadguru? It is often said that one has to really develop the yearning for spiritual guidance in order to find the Guru. The right Guru is one who has cured himself of this disease of Atmabhranti. He is personification of the Divine. Such divinity can be experienced by the seekers through His mesmerizing presence, nectar-like words and enchanting expressions. His heart is full of compassion and sees divinity in all. He wants to remove the darkness of ignorance from our lives. He wants us to experience the peace and bliss within and let go of our external identity, our ego. Just like we are willing to tell the doctor everything about our ailment, we need to be able to keep aside our ego and tell the Guru all about our mental, emotional state, all our faults, wrongdoings and seek his guidance.

Following Guru's Aagna

A Guru plays three roles in the life of a disciple. As a creator, he initiates his disciple in to spirituality. As the protector, he nurtures the disciple's spiritual inclination. And as a destroyer, he annihilates the obstructing tendencies of His disciple, removes the disciple's ego. This requires total surrender, absolute love, unwavering faith and cooperation on the part of the disciple. We need to have this understanding about the Guru-disciple relationship in order for us to follow the 'treatment' prescribed for us so that we can get cured.

Sadguru's satsang pravachans provide us with general guidance. However, the Guru will many times provide us with specific instructions – either in public or in private. Although there are many ways to practice religion, spirituality; only the Guru can tell us which method is best for us and give the aagna accordingly. We need to fully surrender and follow such aagna in its totality. In the disciple's initial stages of spiritual progress, such surrender is difficult. There are three reasons for that: (1) Feeling that "I know everything" (2) The joy does not appear upon hearing Sadguru's words (3) One uses their own imagination and assumption to understand Sadguru's aagna. Hence, we need to (1) Realize that "I do not know anything and I am here to learn" (2) Understand Sadguru's state, grandeur to experience the joy (3) Contemplate on Guru's aagna, understand it and then follow it. .

Contemplation and Meditation

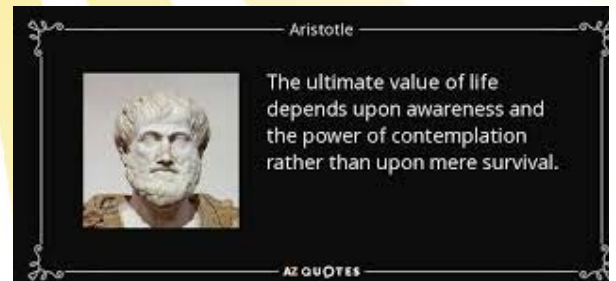
The doctor can prescribe the most effective, proven treatment; but if we do not follow the instructions, do not take the medicines, the disease will not be cured. Similarly, if we let our old habits of attachment and aversion take over, do not let go of our ego and not follow Guru's aagna, the disease of atmabhranti will remain for many lives to come.

Shrimadji says that following Guru's aagna, contemplating on the true nature of the soul and getting in to a meditative state will take us to Samyak Darshan and thus get rid of atmabhranti. Contemplation and Meditation are both related to our internal state. Contemplation is an active state of mind whereas in meditation (Dhyan), the mind is less active, more focused, stable. Even though our goal in spirituality is to reach a state where the mind is inactive (Samadhi), blissful; we need to get there gradually by passing through various contemplative and meditative states.

The contemplative states are (1) "Chintan" – thinking about various spiritual topics (2) "Anupreksha" – thinking about one topic from various angles (3) "Bhavana" – thinking repeatedly about one topic with one angle, one concept. In these states, the mind gets progressively quieter. The meditative states are: (1) "Dhyan" - in this state, the thoughts are now more internally focused. The seeker starts to move away from thinking and quietly awaits to experience the blissful state of the soul. (2) "Samadhi" – this is the state where the mind is completely inactive and the seeker becomes one with the divine.

What to Contemplate upon?

We, the seekers, need to listen to Guru with devotion, faith and with full attention. We need to contemplate on what we have heard and read. The subject and goal of such thinking needs to be "Who am I?". We need to first come to a



firm conclusion (“Tatva Nirnay”) that “I am not the body, I am a soul”. We need to introspect, experiment and increase awareness. After listening to Guru, we need to feel the magnificence of the soul and its innumerable virtues. We need to realize and believe that “That is who I am – a powerful, peaceful soul.” The more time we utilize in such thoughts, the stronger the faith becomes and we move away from the external temporary world around us. Here are some teachings from Jain scriptures to ponder upon:

- 1) Body and Soul are different entities – the former is temporary, the latter is permanent.
- 2) One entity is not capable making any changes in another entity.
- 3) The soul only observes and knows; it does not actively participate in anything.
- 4) Whatever happens in my life is due to my past Karma.
- 5) No external entity – a thing, a person or a situation – is responsible for my happiness or sadness.
- 6) Happiness comes from connecting to the Divine, the True Self. Sadness occurs when this connection is broken.
- 7) Happiness is not in the external things; it is an internal state.
- 8) There is no justifiable reason in this world that should disturb my state of equanimity.



Contemplation of the 12 bhavanas also helps us understand the impermanence of body and the permanence of soul in this world. This is the reason why ‘anitya bhavna’ is the first in the order of 12 bhavnas. Anitya means transitory. All material things of the universe are transitory in nature. What gives one pain is not the changing moods but one’s insistence to see that the things of their liking remain permanent. One experiences every moment that all objects of pleasure, wealth, the power and everything around them undergoes changes. But one tends to forget the soul which is permanent and clings to the thing which is transitory, and if in the process

one becomes unhappy one blames others. Obviously, the pangs of one’s pain would be greatly relieved if one constantly remembers, that change is the rule and clinging to changing modes is pure ignorance. Once we recognize this truth, we will start becoming steady and stable in meditation (dhyana).

Contemplation needs to be practiced by staying in a state of equanimity which is evenness of mind, unshakeable freedom of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by the changes happening in the external world. It is indifference to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position. It is a ‘glad acceptance’ of every situation with a focus on True Self. Practicing equanimity enables us to see things as they are and, at the same time, not be attached to certain outcomes. Inner connection is the source of practicing equanimity. In essence, one must perform all daily routine as well as religious activities with mind concentrated on the Divine, renouncing attachment and looking upon every situation with equanimity. It will eliminate attachment and aversion, the root causes of delusion.

In a Jain text known as Bhagavati-sutra there is a conversation between Lord Mahavira and Gautama. Gautama asked Mahavira “What is the nature of soul?” and Mahavira answered “The nature of soul is equanimity.” Gautama again asked “What is ultimate end of soul?” and Mahavira replied “The ultimate end of soul is also equanimity.” Equanimity is considered as a core or essence of religion. The delusion leads to dualism; good / bad, mine / yours, praise / blame, pleasure / pain, success / failure, gain / loss etc. etc. The equanimity leads to ‘monism’; the pure attributes of soul without any external influence. Delusion can be annihilated only through equanimity.

Mechanics of Meditation



Although an essential part of spiritual path, contemplation alone will not take us to our ultimate goal. In contemplation, the mind is active. In order to experience the blissful state of the soul, the mind needs to be much more steady and quiet. This can be achieved by meditation – “Dhyana”. For an advanced spiritual practitioner, meditation is a state of mind and not just an act of sitting in silence. However, for a beginner, it is an activity and needs to know “how to do it”. To start with, we need to sit down in an upright position in a quiet room, close the eyes, focus

consciously on the breath while inhaling and exhaling, become aware of the present moment and the state of mind. We will find the mind agitated due to its focus on the external things, people and circumstances. We just need to be patient and slowly attempt to take the monkey mind away from these objects. We may find that the mind just does not co-operate. It may even rebel and act weird for a while. It may even argue that the process is dull, boring and not interesting and prod us to run away from it. Weak minded meditators would most likely give in. However, the Guru advises us that with continued and repeated practice and patience, at some point the mind will become relaxed and peaceful because we have stopped providing the external stimuli. We have consciously kept it away from the situations where it would have otherwise reacted instantly with craving and aversion. With time, body will become stable, mind more tranquil allowing the flood of thoughts to trickle down and self-awareness to rise. At some point, we will recognize a vast improvement in the state of mind.

You should sit in meditation for twenty minutes every day - unless you're too busy; then you should sit for an hour.

Some people do not like to use the breath as focus. They may choose to use idol, photo, light or music depending upon their preference. The object of the focus is not important. What is most important is the concentration and high level of mindfulness while doing meditation. Sustained practice of this nature eventually will prepare us to move on to the highest level of meditation - Shukla Dhyana - which would enable us to connect with the soul for a much longer period. The spiritually elevated people may be able to bypass the preliminary stage and start concentrating on the pure-self

(soul) right from the outset. There is nothing right or wrong with either method because the end goal is the same. If we can stay connected with the pure-soul continuously even for 48 minutes regardless of how we arrive at that stage, the scriptures say we could be getting very close to achieving very high level of spiritual achievement.



Witness (Full Awareness) Mode



After regular meditation practice, the seeker's mind gets quieter and he is fully aware of his surroundings. He is also aware of his thoughts and knows that they are a separate entity. In Jainism, constant vigilance means 'awareness' during bare essential activities and/or meditation. The seeker or the true sage strives to keep his/her cognition (Upayog) on the true nature of the soul. In every moment, the seeker tries to contemplate on "I am pure, peaceful and powerful soul". The seeker lets the mind get absorbed in the truth and it does not just remain as a concept. It becomes the state through direct experience. Such truth is soon reflected in every activity. The seeker becomes a witness to all activities whether

standing, walking, eating, drinking, etc. From being the doer and enjoyer of these activities, now he remains aware of being a witness to all the happenings. Thus, the truth that entered as a thought, slowly spreads to every activity and takes a grip on his entire life.

Conclusion: To effect a real change in our attitude and behavior, first we need to put our ego aside and realize that we are suffering from the disease of atmabhranti. And then get guidance from a Guru for our daily practice of contemplation and meditation. We must set a goal to look inwards and reach that blissful state and not lose ourselves in this present age of non-stop information overload through the electronic gadgets such as iphone, ipad, tweets etc. This will not happen unless we make this change in our life style consciously.

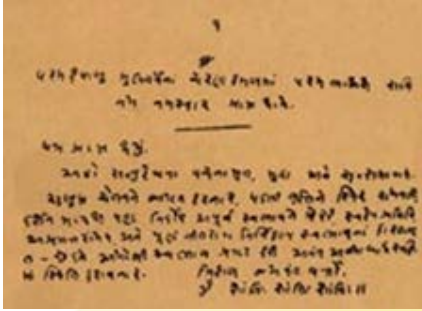
Shrimad Rajchandraji was a truly Enlightened Soul who had achieved great spiritual heights. His compassion was such that He could explain such intricate philosophical truths in such a simple language. We hope to have done justice to His teachings and ask for forgiveness if we have made any statements that are not in line with Shrimadji's and Bhagwan Mahavir's teachings.

References: • Several articles written by Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai published in the "Sadguru Echoes" magazine. His teachings and guidance through His discourses has also been instrumental in bringing this material to you. We are deeply grateful to Him.

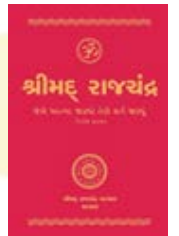
- Vivechan of Atmasiddhi Shastra by Bhogilal Girdharlal Sheth (known as Bapuji)
- Vivechan of Atmasiddhi Shastra by Prem Acharyaji (Param Pujya Pappaji)
- Vivechan of Atmasiddhi Shastra by Dr. Tarulatabai Mahasatiji)

Shrimad Rajchandraji's Letters – "Patranks"

Simple, crystal clear and directed solely at the seeker's internal growth, Shrimad Rajchandraji's teachings have been incessantly illuminating the spiritual path for thousands of seekers over the years. Religion, according to Him, is to realize the true innate nature of the soul. His teachings therefore emphasise a conduct in accordance with the spiritual and ethical norms, and the necessity of a Spiritual Master, a Guru, whose personal guidance is invaluable for one's spiritual advancement. He also emphasises an important precursor to the inward journey - single-minded focus towards the goal of self-realization.



His teachings have been passed on to the seekers through His several texts/treatises-some in prose, some in verse. A large part of Shrimadji's extant literature comprises of letters imparting spiritual guidance to devotees, which speak volumes of the exalted spiritual state He had attained. In addition, they beautifully expound profound topics such as the virtues of the Soul, the importance of an Enlightened Guru, the necessity of devotion, and much more. Some letters are also direct responses to queries or problems faced by aspirants, divulging effective techniques to combat them. These letters are a crystalline reflection of the pure philosophy of Bhagwan Mahavira, solely aimed at the welfare and bliss of every individual.



These letters have been published by Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram, Agas, Gujarat, in a book titled "Shrimad Rajchandra", popularly known as "Vachanamrut". Below are a few letters translated in English (courtesy of Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram, Dharampur) – reprinted here to provide our readers a glimpse in to Shrimadji's invaluable advice to the seekers.

PATRANK 135: FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF SAMYAK DARSHAN

Vavania, 2nd Bhadarva Sud 14, Sunday, 1946

Spiritually inclined brethren,

It gives me great satisfaction to see that your heart is touched by the desire for liberation. The aspiration that the cycles of birth and death since time immemorial should now come to an end, is certainly beneficial. An opportune time will arrive when that which is desired will be attained.

Constantly pen your state of mind. Keep kindling your aspiration. And though you may have heard the following spiritual discussion, keep reflecting upon it over and over again.

There are five attributes of samyak darshan (right belief):

1) Sham 2) Samveg 3) Nirved 4) Aastha 5) Anukampa

The subsiding of passions such as anger, the reduction in the passions that are manifest, the state of being that can be reverted, or the subsiding of tendencies present since time immemorial is 'sham'.

No other desire or aspiration but to get liberated is 'samveg'.

From the time it is understood that the cycles of birth and death occurred due to delusion alone, since then a firm resolve that 'Now, enough is enough, Oh Soul! Now stop!', this is 'nirved'.

Engrossment in the words of the desire-less Masters, whose greatness is unparalleled is 'shraddha' - 'aastha'.

Through all these, a sense that all souls are like my soul is 'anukampa'.

These attributes are certainly worthy of reflection, worthy of remembrance, worthy of desiring and worthy of experiencing. More on another occasion.

Raichand's regards

PATRANK 37: GETTING RID OF ATTACHMENTS AND AVERSIONS IS THE REAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Mumbai Port, Aso Vad 2, Thursday, 1944

Salutation to Bhagwan Parshwanath

Dear truth-aspiring brother Ujamsi, Rajnagar

I received your handwritten letter last evening. Your quest for knowledge was deeply satisfying.

Infinite attempts to look good in the eyes of the world have not accrued any benefit, because traversing through life-cycles and its causes are still present. One birth spent towards the upliftment of the Soul, will compensate for infinite life-cycles; this is my humble understanding and all my activities are aimed towards this. It is my belief that I should adopt the best possible means and instruments to be free of this intense bondage. Why then should I consider whether it is favourable or unfavourable to the world? Regardless of what it says, if the soul is being free of its shackles and attaining samadhi (state of tranquillity), this should be done. This will lead to freedom from fame or infamy forever.

I am aware of their opinion regarding me, however, it is best not to pay heed to it. Have no fear. If someone says anything about me, listen, but do not react. Do not harbour any likes or dislikes towards them. The one for whom you have a strong attachment, reveres the Supreme Jina, the Greatest Yogi Bhagwan Parshwanath. Keep Him in mind and remaining dispassionate; aspire for the state of complete liberation. Do not get entangled in thoughts regarding life and death. To attain purity, give up thinking about the world. Remember the state of the Great Yogi Bhagwan Parshwanath etc. and aspire only for that state; this is my repeated advice and blessings to you. This humble soul is also desirous of that state, and is a modest disciple completely surrendered at the Lotus feet of Bhagwan. He advises you to have the same faith. Do not forget that everything taught by Veerswami with respect to substance, space, time and modifications is exactly according to reality. If His teachings have been slighted in any way, repent for that. Considering the present times, with awareness, surrender your mind, speech and body to Him, this alone is the path to liberation. Relinquish the belief in all philosophies - sects of the world. Abandon all your notions about Jainism: remain focused only on the glorious life of Bhagwan directed by abidance in the Self.

Do not entertain any happiness or sadness for this one you consider as 'respectable'. His only desire is to be free from thought processes and reside in the state of no-mind. He has nothing to do with this strange world. Neither does he have anything to accept from it nor offer to it. Therefore, whatever the world thinks or says about him, holds no value for him. To return to the world gradually all the particles collected from it in the past, and thus absolve himself of all debts - this is his constant, conscious, cherished, greatest and supreme aspiration; besides that he knows nothing; he desires nothing. All his activities are based on past karmas - knowing this, be completely content. Keep this conversation confidential. We need not reveal to the world what we believe or why we act thus. Rather you need to ask yourself only this - if you are desirous of liberation, then drop your unnecessary thinking, likes and dislikes and if there are any obstacles in doing so, let me know. You will realise and drop it on your own.

To be free from passion and aversion from everywhere, that only is my religion; which now, I am teaching you. When we meet in person, I will show you some spiritual practices if possible. Else, religion is only what I have stated above. Focus on that alone. Awareness is the only sadhana (spiritual pursuit). Advanced sadhana is only the Lotus feet of the Enlightened, which also, I am conveying.

Maintain soul-consciousness in everything; remain meditative. It is not at all right to feel glad or sad about anything in the world, relatives, family or friends. To aspire for a state of supreme tranquillity, that only is our universally accepted religion, and in this repeated longing it will be attained. Therefore, have no anxiety. I belong to no sect, but dwell in the soul; do not forget this.

The one whose body is for the sake of religion, whatever is done to sustain that body is also only for religion.

Respectfully, Raichandra

PATRANK 194: WHY HAS ONE NOT FOUND THE PATH?

Mumbai, Posh, 1947

Why has one not found the path?

Ponder upon this repeatedly, and when you feel it appropriate, read the accompanying letter.

Though my present state is not one in which I can write or explain much, only to prevent you from feeling offended, I have written what I felt was appropriate under the circumstances.

I feel that the path is simple, but getting to it, is difficult.

Salutations to the True Self with oneness and supreme devotion.

Without offering unwavering love and true faith at the Lotus Feet of an Enlightened Being who constantly moves about without any limitations, the True Self can not be attained. And with the cultivation of these feelings, the seeker undoubtedly reaches the same state as that of the Enlightened Being at whose Lotus Feet he has surrendered. This is the path that was tread by all Enlightened Beings, is being tread upon at present and will be tread upon in the future. I attained self-realisation through this path. This is the path for Enlightenment at present, and for all times to come. This is the true essence of the teachings of all scriptures. Anyone wishing to attain liberation should, with unwavering determination, follow this path only. By not following this path one has been through innumerable cycles of birth and death since time immemorial. So long as one has the blindness of self-willed behaviour, the path cannot be perceived. (To remove this blindness) one has to contemplate upon the path; have a strong yearning for liberation; think about it ceaselessly, then the path is attained and blindness dispelled. Believe this without doubt. From time immemorial, one has walked on the wrong path. Although one has carried out chanting, austerities, reading of the scriptures etc. infinite number of times, one has not done that which was absolutely essential, that which I have mentioned above.

In Suyagadangsutra, where Bhagwan Rushabhdeva has addressed His ninety-eight sons and guided them along the path of liberation, He has given them the same direction:

Oh! Blessed ones! This soul has done everything except this one thing. What is that? Certainly, one has not heard the words, the teachings of an Enlightened Being, or not put them in action. And it is this that I call a monk's samayik, (attainment of the Self).

Sudharmaswami reveals to Jambuswami that Bhagwan Mahavira, who has perceived the whole world, has said this to me:- Infinite number of people have surrendered themselves to their Guru and attained liberation by following His ajna (commands).

Not only here but everywhere and in all scriptures, this is the essence of the teachings.

Anae dhammo anae tavo

Following His ajna is religion. Following His ajna is austerity. (Acharang Sutra)

Everywhere, this is the essence of what the Great Ones have to say, and it is this essence, that one has failed to understand. The main reason amongst others for this failure is one's own self-willed behaviour. The one who has decreased this self-willed behaviour, should contemplate on the best remedy for eliminating bondage (bondage regarding society, bondage of family, bondage of attachment to the body and bondage of thought processes) based on this. And in this process, ask me anything you feel appropriate. With the development of adequate qualifications on this path, somehow, you will find peace. Try to look for peace and someone whose ajna you can follow.

All other practices are to be performed later. On contemplation, you will not find another path to liberation. If you think of any other path, do let me know so that an appropriate response can be given.

PATRANK 570: SHRIMAD RAJCHANDRAJI'S LETTER TO MAHATMA GANDHI

Mumbai, Fagan Vad 5, Saturday, 1951

To Shri Mohanlal, Shri Durban.

Have received your letter. As worldly entanglements are renounced, tranquillity manifests. As worldly entanglements are assumed, the inner bliss is disturbed. Upon reflection, this fact can be experienced clearly. Even a slight analysis about the objects of the world cannot but lead to dispassion towards them, because it is only lack of analysis that causes attachment towards them.

'The 'Soul exists', 'the Soul is eternal', 'the Soul is the doer of karma', 'the Soul is the enjoyer of karma', 'the Soul can attain liberation from it and 'there are means to attain liberation': when these six fundamental truths are realised after deliberation, that should be considered as the attainment of the power of discrimination or samyaktarshan (right belief) according to the Jina. This exposition should be studied in depth by spiritual aspirants.

The contemplation of these six fundamental truths arises either through the deep impressions of the past or because of the influence of satsang.

Due to a sense of attachment towards impermanent things, the existence, permanence, and uninhibited bliss of the Soul cannot be comprehended. Since time immemorial the soul is so engrossed in its attachment that through gradual discrimination, eventually the bewildered soul has to return. And before the knot of delusion could be severed, often in the past, this discrimination has been given up. Because without intense effort, that which has been practised since time immemorial cannot be given up in a short span. Therefore, repeatedly through satsang, scriptures and by cultivating deep contemplation; intense efforts should be made towards this. The result of which is the dawn of the permanent, eternal, blissful Self-realisation. The rising doubts are calmed through patience and contemplation. By impatience or through weird imagination the soul loses the opportunity of its own upliftment and because of attachment to impermanent things, it is again and again subjected to cycles of birth and death.

Knowing that you harbour a desire for self-enquiry gives me great pleasure. In this pleasure, there is no selfishness. Your wish to embark on the path of inner bliss will bring you the opportunity to get liberated from the agonies of the world. Seeing such possibility, I naturally feel joyous. That alone is my recommendation.

Salutations to the Divinity in you.



Bibliography of Literature in English About Shrimad Rajchandraji

(2nd Edition, published on April 14, 2017) is a useful resource material for those who want to know more about Yugpurush Shrimadji. It includes a list of publications in English and brief information about each.

To get a free copy, write to Prakash Mody at 4prakash@gmail.com or to Jain Digest at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

List of Institutions in North America where Shrimad Rajchandraji's Chitrapat or Idol has been installed

Name	City/State	Year	Information
In USA			
Jain Center of America	Queens, New York	2005	Shrimadji's Chitrapat Pratistha in Khadgasan was done in the 3rd floor Hall.
Long Island Spiritual Center, SRMD (USA)	Long Island, New York	2012	First Spiritual Center outside India of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur. All activities similar to Dharampur are performed.
Jain Center of New Jersey	Franklin Township, New Jersey	2012	Shrimadji's Chitrapat Sthapna with other Pratishthas
Siddhachalam	Blairs Town, New Jersey	1893	This Ashram was established by Acharya Sushilmuniji. Shrimadji Chitrapat Sthapna is in one Kutir where Satsangs are held.
Jain Center of South Florida	Miami, Florida	2005	Shrimadji Chitrapat Pratistha
Jain Center of Central Florida	Orlando, Florida	2009	Shrimadji Chitrapat Pratistha
Jain Center of Central Ohio	Lewis Center, Ohio	2013	Shrimadji Chitrapat Pratistha
Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago	Chicago, Illinois	1993 & 1996	Shrimadji's Chitrapat Sthapna was done along with other Pratishthas. In 1996, during the Atmasiddhi Centenary, Shrimadji's gold plated Pratimaji was consecrated in an extended temple.
Jain Center of Northern California	Milpitas, California	2000	Shrimadji's marble idol was consecrated in Guru Mandir.
Jain Center of Southern California	Buena Park, California	2005	Shrimadji's Chitrapat Sthapna was done by Pujyashri Rakeshbhai in Aaradhana Hall.
Jain Center of Greater Phoenix	Phoenix, Arizona	2008	Shrimadji's Chitrapat Sthapna was done by Pujyashri Rakeshbhai
In Canada			
Jain Society of Toronto, Shrimad Rajchandra Bhakti Group	Etobicoke, Toronto, Ontario	1991	Shrimadji's Chitrapat Sthapna was done in the Hall.
Toronto Spiritual Centre, SRMD (Canada)	Maple, Greater Toronto, Ontario	2016	Sthapna of Shrimadji's Chitrapat in three different poses was done by Pujyashri Rakeshbhai
Bhagwan 1008 Adinath Swamy Jain Temple	Brampton, Greater Toronto, Ontario	2014	Shrimadji's Chitrapat Sthapna was done by Pujyashri Rakeshbhai.

Notes:

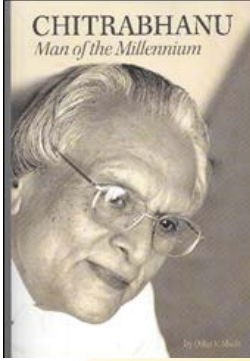
1. All the above institutions are Temples with full facilities.
2. SRMD = Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur
3. Year mentioned relates to Shrimadji's Chitrapat Sthapna (Picture consecration) or Pratimaji (Idol).
4. Swadhyay, Bhakti, Satsangs, Celebrations, etc. are performed.

Chitrabhanu: Man of the Millennium

A Book Review by Nirmala Hanke, M.D.



Dr. Nirmala Hanke is President of the Lighthouse Center, Inc. in Whitmore Lake, MI. The Lighthouse Center is interfaith, open to all spiritual pathways, founded by Chetana Catherine Florida in 1979, and under the guidance of Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji. The center embraces the Jain Philosophy of Ahimsa and promotes a vegan lifestyle. Nirmala is a practicing psychiatrist, focusing on meditative psychotherapy and Reiki healing.



In this comprehensive and inspiring book about Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji's life, Mr. Dilip Shah captures the very essence of the man who has touched the lives of countless Jains and non-Jains in India, America and around the world. The book traces his life in India (to which the author is much indebted to Clare Rosenfeld's first biography in English) to the second half of his life in America and throughout the world. From the opening tributes by Acharya Chandanaji and two of Mr. Shah's mentors, Drs. Diraj Shah and Sulekh Jain, past presidents of JAINA, to the closing remarks by Pramodaji and family members, it is clear that we are blessed to have Chitrabhanuji in our midst. As one early American student of Gurudev said, "He was virtually ego-less, caring and very gentle. When he spoke, it was pure poetry. He taught us specially to learn to 'catch the ego'. He would say, 'Your ego can be a good servant, but always will be a poor master' "

Gurudev, now 95, continues to promote Mahavir's message of Ahimsa and to live as much as possible a life of nonviolence. He attributes his long life to his daily practice of meditation, 3-4 hours of silence, and a vegan diet. Looking back over his life, he said, in a Forbes interview in 2015: "...essentially I have not changed. I am still living a life of simplicity and living in harmony with one's nature, which was at the core of my life as a monk 40 years ago." As a monk in India, he spoke to crowds of up to 200,000; since being in America he has inspired and supported the growth of 70 Jain centers in the US and Canada. He is a beloved spiritual leader of Jains in America, the UK, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Kenya, Singapore, Dubai, Muscat, Malaysia.

How has he accomplished all of this?

Gurudev's life has been marked by successive courageous transformations. As a young boy Ruprajendra ("Rup"), he showed courage when some bullies were harassing a girl student. Without hesitation he stopped the bullies, even though they were much bigger than he and called him a coward. He was equally courageous when it came to dealing with some of his own inner enemies: an outburst of anger, of greed, and giving up a bad habit of smoking. From a young age, he grappled with the deaths of his mother, his sister, and his dear college friend Usha, asking, "Why do my loved ones leave me?" It was his search for the answer to such questions, about the meaning of life, that led him to become a monk: Muni Chandraprabh Sagar.

As a monk Chandraprabh showed courage again, taking unorthodox steps: giving talks in the evening, speaking to the Harijans (Untouchables), saving women in a house fire, encouraging the Svetamber, Digambar and Sthanakwasi sects to celebrate religious holidays together. Wanting to transcend strict Jain sectarianism, he began writing with a pen name, Chitrabhanu, in the local papers, to the larger Jain audience. A major transformation came when Chitrabhanu decided to break the Jain monk vow of no travel except by foot. He said, "Wherever the need for Mahavir's message exists, a Jain Sadhu must travel—that is his duty". Many disagreed, and when he flew to the 2nd Spiritual Summit Conference in Geneva, 10 busloads of people with stones went to the airport to try to stop him. After the conference, he decided to leave the monkhood, marry Pramodaji, and go to America to share Jain teachings with the West.

Throughout his life Chitrabhanuji has been an open-minded and independent thinker, so it is no surprise that in the 1990s, in his 70s, he and Pramodaji, on learning of the vegan movement and the extreme cruelty to animals on factory farms, without hesitation began to advocate for the elimination of milk and ghee in the Jain diet and in Jain temples. He inspired the Lighthouse Center, Inc. an interfaith center for spiritual growth in Michigan, where he and Pramodaji are spiritual advisors, to become a vegan center. As Gary Francine, a friend of Gurudev's and a legal scholar well known for his work on animal rights theory, writes: "The Jains expressed it well long ago: 'All beings are fond of life, like pleasure, hate pain, shun destruction. To all life is dear.' "Gurudev trusts that in time all Jains will come to agree that being Jain is being vegan. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dilip Shah for giving us this remarkable story of Chitrabhanuji's life and mission as Mahavir's messenger of Ahimsa. The book is available only on Amazon.com

JAINA & JITO – Helping Jain Communities Everywhere

By Dr. Bipin Doshi



Dr. Bipin Doshi is a physician, a social worker, a writer and a Jain scholar. He is a founder Secretary of JITO Apex. He is a Jainology teacher and founder of the Jain Chair at University of Mumbai. He currently serves as a Vice President at Veerayatan and Senate member at Jain Vishva Bharati Institute at Ladnun, Rajasthan. He is also the writer of book “Gandhi before Gandhi”.

(Information about the JYEP program in Boston was provided by Mr. Dilip Jain, President, Jain Center of Greater Boston.)

There are various Jain and humanitarian organization in India with whom JAINA works cooperatively to achieve our bilateral goals. One such organization is Jain International Trade Organization - JITO. It is a largest organization of Jains in India that started 10 years ago to help Jain businesses, but has evolved into multifaceted organization with far reaching impact for Jains all over the world. This article seeks to explain various activities undertaken by JITO that may be of interest to the Jains of North America.

JAINA Youth Exchange Program - JYEP

JITO is a partner in the JAINA Youth Exchange Program - JYEP. The intent of the program is to allow Jain youth in India to observe Jainism, Jain Way of Life and daily conduct – household and professional – of Jains living in the US. It is hoped that they can take the good practices of US based Jains and help implement them in India.

In this third year of the program, 12 youth were selected from total of 363 applicants from all over India to visit JAINA Convention and various Jain centers in America. The selection process included written test conducted at 37 different centers all across the country and multiple rounds of personal interviews. JITO works hard to ensure that every test, every selection is done purely on merit basis. This year, for the first time, the group included Boston in its itinerary. Jain Center of Greater Boston (JCGB) recently hosted these young Jains from India. They took active part in the JCGB's Pratishtha Anniversary program where they performed the combined Dev Shashtra Guru (Digambar tradition) and Snatra (Swetambar tradition) puja that is a unique JCGB tradition, and then contested in the Kaun Banega Dharma Shiromani quiz show.



Their visit included tours of the Boston area universities – MIT, Harvard and Northeastern, and historical sites. They interacted and spent time with the youth of JCGB. The last afternoon of their visit was spent in Rhode Island visiting the Newport area attractions like Cliff Walk and beaches. They departed for New York City to continue their tour of the US and attend the JAINA convention in New Jersey. It was a memorable visit for both the visitors and the hosts.

JITO, in past 10 years has been on a Glorious Journey and has created deep footprints in Economic, Education and Social Spheres. We continue to dream big and convert them into reality by keeping pace with the times and challenges and are determined to become world's best community.

1. JITO Business Networking (JBN) - foremost JITO objective is Economic Empowerment by creating a global networking platform for JITO Members. It is expected to leverage and unleash the tremendous business and economic power of the global Jain community.
2. JITO Incubation Centre - A project for incubating new ideas and supporting budding talents in technology and other fields by providing basic facilities, mentoring and assistance in getting financial resources.
3. JITO International Wing - To build strong relations internationally through networking and achieving synergy of

- expertise, resources & talent for mutual growth and society upliftment.
4. JITO G2G (Good-to-Great) G2G Companies are those who show meteoric rise and continue to maintain it. The program inspires members to follow Good-to-Great trajectory. The first such conference was organized in Dubai in 2015 and the second conference was organised in Santa Clara, USA during 2016. Now JITO G2G – Going Global – is organising its 3rd International Business and Networking Conference “JITOPRENEURS 2017” at London, UK in October 2017.
 5. JITO Connect (Global Summit) - JITO organizes Global Summit to showcase its objectives. So far 7 global summits have been held at Bengaluru, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Mumbai (3) and Pune. Next JITO Connect shall be in Delhi in January 2018. A large scale Trade Fair is organized on this occasion. Last Global Summit witnessed over 4,50,000 visitors during 3 days event.
 6. JITO Administrative Training Foundation, empowers Jain youth to join highest civil service positions at national or state levels through its 6 training centres. So far 296 of our candidates have been appointed at top secretariats (policy makers) at national or state level. This foundation also runs the following programs.
 - JELP - JITO Education Loan Programme
 - Soft Loan for Empowering Education & Development
 - BEAT- Bank Public Officer Exam Aptitude Training
 - Hostel Projects at Kota for IIT students and Kolkata for IIM students. These hostels are highly subsidised by JITO.
 7. Shraman Arogyam - “Shraman Arogyam” takes care of the medical facilities free-of-cost to Sadhu & Sadhvi Bhagwants of all sects. More than 11,299 Sadhu & Sadhvi Bhagwants are registered and so far around Rs.21 Crs. have been spent on their healthcare.
 8. Jain Global Card - An instrument to reach out to every Jain family across the globe. The card will ensure various benefits for various economic, educational and social benefits.
 9. JITO Matrimonial Assistance Programme - 7,420 men and 5,056 women candidates registered in the 23 matrimonial meets held so far
 10. Many other activities such as JITO Employment Assistance Programme, JITO Premier League (JPL) – Cricket matches and other games to connect Jain youth, Voice of JITO – Monthly publication (Print and online), JITO Annual International Trips, and global Talent Hunt.

The Secretariat of JITO is located in Mumbai with about 100 staff or consultative positions.

The platform created by the partnering of the two large unparalleled legacy organizations - JAINA and JITO - can help Jain communities everywhere in the economic empowerment, social, technological and educational spheres.

For more information, please visit jito.org or Contact drbipindoshi@yahoo.com

Seminar on Jainism and Yoga

JAINA and L. D. Institute of Indology will conduct a one-day joint seminar on “Jain Yog” on January 17th 2018 at L. D. Institute. It is expected that there will be scholarly papers covering Agams, commentaries from Agams and views of Shree Haribhadrasuri, Shree Hemchandracharyaji, Shree Yashovijayji and Comparative studies of both. A call for papers has gone out and more details will be available on JAINA website in the near future.

YJA Pathshala – An Introduction

By Anjali Doshi



Anjali Doshi is a Masters student at Columbia University studying Biomedical Engineering. She is originally from Chicago, Illinois. A Pathshala teacher and Jain Academic Bowl alumna, she has enjoyed sharing her Jain knowledge and learning even more as YJA's 2016-2017 Director of Education. Anjali loves to discuss Jain philosophy, practice, and daily life. You can reach out to her with thoughts, questions, and ideas at anjali.doshi@yja.org!

My earliest memories of engaging with Jainism involve going to temple and to pathshala classes. Taking notes on Tirthankars, reviewing the material at home, and learning to say Jainism's main prayers with other students as a young girl, lead to me continue to learn about and engage with Jainism as I grew older and I eventually became a Pathshala teacher myself. Pathshala classes (organized classes on Jain prayers, theory, and practice, typically at a temple or run through a temple) are one of the most common ways Jain youth gain a basic understanding of Jainism which they can carry throughout the rest of their lives. Many pathshalas start out with stavans and stories, and slowly move toward more theory, philosophy and discussion of how we can explain Jain principles. This basis of knowledge often provides a base for us to make important decisions as we grow older and can also shape our day-to-day actions and lifestyle.



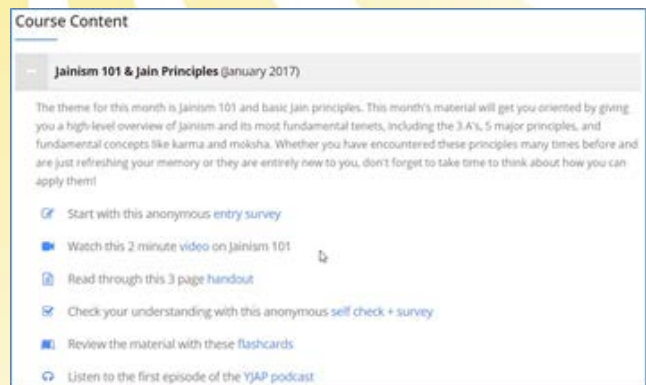
But it is important to remember that there are Jain youth across the country who are not able to access a traditional in-person pathshala. Reasons for lack of attendance can include extracurricular commitments that conflict with pathshala, increased workload starting junior year of high school, distance from the derasar or attending a college without a nearby derasar, less push from parents in the face of other obligations, or finding it harder to relate pathshala content to their day-to-day lives. While typically children up to the age of 15-16 go regularly, especially because of parental influence, around age 16 youth stop attending pathshala. This decline was noted in a JAINA survey conducted at the 2016 YJA Convention: 45% of under-15 year olds surveyed attended pathshala regularly, but this number dropped to 25% of youth ages 15-20, and just 2% of youth ages 20-29.

We've been hearing for years that YJA members would be interested in filling this gap by having a virtual option: a pathshala program with content accessible anywhere, at any time, and created in a style accessible and relevant to youth ages 16-29 who are unable to attend an in-person pathshala, yet still interested in learning about Jainism and applying it to their lives. Our focus on education for Jain youth and this feedback from our membership was the inspiration for the creation of YJA Pathshala.

YJA Pathshala: The Basics

YJA Pathshala is an online course of which the initial release spans several months, covering one complete basic level of a Jain pathshala. The syllabus has been based on pathshala syllabi and reviewed by Pravin Shah, JAINA Director of Education, and other pathshala leaders. Topics include Jain philosophy, rituals, and history and culture, and applications to daily life and the modern world. The course is low-time commitment and low-stress.

The material is accessible anytime, anywhere—all that is needed is an internet connection. Various platforms including videos, handouts, flashcards, and podcasts will be used to engage learners of all learning styles and at all levels of knowledge about Jainism. Anyone who cannot regularly attend pathshala, or who does attend pathshala but has interest in supplemental materials, is encouraged to take part. There is no prerequisite level of knowledge of Jainism—whether





you have never attended pathshala or have won the Jain Academic Bowl tournament, as long as you are curious about Jainism, the course will be interesting and relevant to you! Additionally, though the course is intended for youth ages 16-29, there are no restrictions on age range. The discussion component will be most relevant to those in the intended age range, but anyone can access the content.

Why Online Pathshala?

There are a variety of reasons that we think it is important to have an easy-to-access, self-paced course on Jainism basics, both for Jain youth and for anyone else interested in learning more about our religion.

Firstly, derasars are often not just religious locations, but centers of organization for members of the Jain community. Nataks, dance performances, musical events, holidays, and food all occur at the derasar and are centered around the Jain religion. But for youth who do not have a solid background in Jainism and understanding of Jain rituals, the temple may not seem very accessible. Additionally, Jainism's main prayers and rituals are in languages that many of us as Jain youth do not speak. Learning what these prayers and actions mean can help youth get more out of trips to the temple and make them feel more comfortable in that setting, increasing the chance that they will continue to visit their local Jain temple and participate in the Jain community, even as they move away from home to start school or work.



In addition to providing a tie to a community, Jainism provides an ethical guide to living life through its philosophy, as well as a practical guide to becoming a better person. With the hectic, overscheduled lifestyles many of us have, taking some time to reflect on what principles we want to live life by can help us become happier and more fulfilled.

Lastly, particularly for our youth members, we see this pathshala as an opportunity for connection and community building. Many YJA friendships are built in person at retreats or at convention—if youth don't live in the same part of the country, they may only see each other every 1-2 years. Having a shared learning experience through YJA Pathshala, and engaging with the YJA Forums platform to discuss, debate, and hear each other's perspectives, will create a space for youth to reconnect and bond, maintaining relationships that will last a lifetime.

To see the lessons that have been released so far or to sign up for YJA Pathshala updates, visit our website at yja.org/pathshala. Contact us at pathshala@yja.org with any questions. We look forward to learning with you!

Happy Learning !



YOUNG JAINS OF AMERICA

JAINA's youth arm, YJA was founded in 1991 to serve Jain youth ages 14-29 across the country.

PROGRAMS

Sangh Events

spend time at your local sangh, from major holidays to swadhyays, lectures, and temple cleanup
visit your region at yja.org

College Chapters

find your Jain peers in school through student organizations at campuses across the country
yja.org/colleges

**Get more
involved
with YJA!**

Local

Representatives

coordinate local YJA events and gain valuable leadership skills! any youth ages 14-29 can serve - applications will open in the fall
yja.org/localrep

Executive Board

be one of 16 leaders shaping YJA's work nationwide! learn a multitude of skills and join the YJA Board family. find out more online
yja.org/board

LEADERSHIP

Convention Committee and #YJA18

help organize and execute YJA's largest and most impactful event. the next biennial YJA convention will be in July 2018 in Chicago!
Convention Committee applications will open in the fall
yja.org/2018

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YOUNG JAINS OF AMERICA

Young Jains of America

Federation of Jain Associations in North America

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Dear Jain Digest readers,

You haven't heard from us in this magazine since last fall, but we promise we've been busy! If you're unfamiliar with YJA, we work to provide **Jain youth ages 14-29** across the country opportunities to meet and engage with each other through social, service, and education-related programming. These events range from local meetups, to regional retreats, to our biennial convention, which will be held in Chicago in 2018.

We are so privileged to have had the opportunity to lead YJA through this incredibly transformative year. We took this year to look to our past, hosting a meetup for 25 years of YJA leaders at the JAINA Convention. We prioritized planning for the future by co-hosting a meeting with the JAINA Long Range Planning Committee. Our Directors started or improved programs like **YJA Pathshala, YJA Forums, and College Chapters**, and Regional Coordinators currently have a team of over 125 Local Representatives who connect youth in our communities. We've held **two YJA-wide service events**: an Interregional Clothing Drive and an international Walk-A-Thon to raise money for Akshaya Patra in partnership with Young Jains UK and Young Jains Singapore. YJA continued its global push with a lunch in Mumbai that brought Jain youth from the US and India together. Youth and adult writers also contributed to our **Young Minds publication**; our May 2017 issue is YJA's longest ever.

Looking forward, the YJA website is now modern and mobile-friendly. Starting with our #GivingTuesday fundraising campaign, we began an effort to better update and engage donors and supporters. We've selected a city and are already **getting ready for the #YJA18 Convention in Chicago**. Lastly, and most importantly, we've made a strong effort to get YJA members much **more involved in their local sanghs** by volunteering, attending events, and helping spread the word about opportunities to participate at the temple to other local youth. We know these relationships will build the future of our Jain communities for years to come.

Our board's term is coming to an end, and while we wish we could stay forever, that means it's time for a new group to step up! We'll be introducing the 2017-2018 YJA Executive Board very soon; however, there are many other ways to **get involved as a leader within YJA**. Whether as a Convention Committee member, a Subcommittee member, or a Local Representative, YJA leaders gain professional skills, an expanded network, and a YJA family. Giving your time to YJA is an opportunity to tangibly affect the lives of Jain youth from communities large and small. Please reach out to us if you'd like to learn more!

From our entire board, best wishes and Micchami Dukkadam. We hope to see you soon!

With #yjalove,

Avish Jain and Hetali Lodaya
Co-Chairs, 2016-2017



25 years of YJA leaders @ JAINA 2017.
Credit: Deep Moments Photography

Young Jains of America (YJA) is the umbrella youth organization of the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA). The mission of YJA is to be recognized nationally and internationally as an umbrella youth organization for establishing a network to share Jain heritage and religion through youth.



19th Biennial JAINA Convention

By Dilip V. Shah

Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is a past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Diaspora Committee and member of the Academic Liaison Committee. He is a frequent contributor to the Jain Digest. e-mail: dilipvshah@gmail.com

19th Biennial JAINA Convention was held in Edison, NJ from June 30 to July 4th. Over 3,500 people attended this family oriented, fun filled, informative, entertaining and spiritually uplifting event. The theme of the convention was "Jainism and Science" – and many of the presentations by more than 70 invited Sadhus/Sadhwis & scholars revolved around that theme. A 175-page souvenir was issued containing congratulatory messages and scholarly articles.

The first day of the convention began with a blessing ceremony by our Sadhu Sadhwis. 20 great souls gave their blessings for success of the convention and set an auspicious tone for the next four days. As is JAINA's tradition, the opening night was reserved as an ice breaker – Graba Rass night for the young and old, new and the veterans of JAINA in their finest Indian garbs dancing to Uday Mazmudar and Rekha Trivedi's melodious singing and heart throbbing orchestra of Samir Date and Dipalee Somayia from Mumbai.

Saturday, July 1

The second day of the convention began with an outdoor grand procession with various Jain centers parading with their members under a colorful flag identifying their center.



It was a beautiful, cloudless nice weather day. This year the unique addition to the traditional procession was inclusion of a chariot (Rath) that was provided by JCA - Jain Center of America. In the Rath there were Pratimajis of our Teerthankars that were later installed in the Temple built specially for the convention. The procession, with our reverend Sadhu, Sadhwis and Scholars leading, accompanied by brass band playing and dancing group of kids, ladies and men poured into the convention hall ceremoniously where the plenary session of the convention was about to begin.

The opening ceremony began with the JAINA President Ashok Domadia and the convener Gunvant Shah welcoming the scholars and dignitaries on the stage. A prerecorded Manglik was presented by a Guru Bhagavant

via a video presentation as an auspicious opening for the plenary session of the convention.

After the lamp lighting ceremony and welcoming speeches, JAINA Presidential awards were given to four individuals and two institutions.

- 1) Outstanding Jivdaya & Education Award: Shaleen Shah of Erie, Colorado for creating a 40-acre sanctuary for rescued animals. He is using the sanctuary as a platform to educate people about animal rights.
- 2) Outstanding Community Services Award: Punita Shah of Vestal, NY for supporting less fortunate people in her community financially, physically and emotionally. She is a sister to several, mother to many and friend to thousands.
- 3) Outstanding Social Service Award: Dr. Kanan Patrawala, founding member of Jain Center of NJ, working for the cause of women empowerment, volunteer for KIDSPower and consultant to a self-help group for Bipolar disorder in NJ.
- 4) Presidential Appreciation Award: Gunvant Shah of NJ for his service to JAINA in various capacities over the last 12 years and convener of the 2017 Convention.

Veerayatan, a partner organization of JAINA, was awarded "Outstanding Service award" for their educational activities by building several schools and colleges, disaster relief activities and spiritual work headed by Acharya Chandanaji.

Anekant Community Center of Los Angeles, won the Outstanding Community Service Award. ACC was established in 2005 by Jain Center of Southern California members for non-religious humanitarian activities. ACC raises funds for conducting free surgical camps in many countries including the US, India, Zambia, South Africa, Malawi, Fiji, Jamaica etc.



Next, Dr. Abhay Firodia, Industrialist, Philanthropist, great Humanitarian and President of Veerayatan delivered his keynote address. He quoted Dr. Radhakrishnan stating

that Jainism existed long before Vedas were created. Step by step and logically he explained, with lively examples how Jainism created the value system that is at the heart of Upanishads and Gita.

After his keynote speech, a short video by Pulkit Jain, a 20-year-old up and coming singer, composer and musician from Mumbai, performing a music video of Navkar Mantra and Jain Unity was presented which drew lots of cheers specially from the younger generation. Next, two books by two citizen scholars were unveiled.

The first was "Man of the Millennium" a biography of 95 years old Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji who, along with Acharya Sushilkumarji inspired formation of JAINA. The second book was by Dr. Pravin L Shah of Pennsylvania in Gujarati on the complex subject of Bhaktiyog - "*Atmasadhnana Amrut Anusandhan*"

Acharya Shri Lokeshmuni delivered the second keynote address. He marveled the excellent work JAINA does in promoting unity among all the Jains of North America and wondered if JAINA could hold a much-needed unity convention in India. Sadhvi Shree Sanghmitraji sang a Mangal Path to conclude the plenary session.

The main stage of the convention center held various presentations, singing sessions, plays or speeches by scholars on Saturday, Sunday and Monday afternoons and cultural and entertainment programs at night. Many of the scholars presented their discourses in the breakout rooms in the Sheraton and Edison hotels nearby to which bus services were provided.

After lunch, in the Temple area of the convention, Bhaktamar Poojan was conducted by Shri Narendra Nandu of Mumbai and about 160 people took part in it. On the main stage, Veeraytan made a two-hour presentation of various Veerayatan initiatives. Dr. Abhay Firodia gave slide presentation of an ambitious project of building a modern digital museum to showcase Jain philosophy, culture and history. The multimillion dollar project is entirely funded by Firodia trust and is a gift by his family to the nation. Acharya Shree Chandanaji and Jainesh Mehta of Houston presented various educational activities of Veeraytan with special mention of Taxshila Pragyatirth Project in Palitana to educate Sadhvis of all sects in academic or religious subjects. The facility is already under construction and will also benefit students who may be aspiring to accept Diksha in the near future. After a brief musical interlude by

renowned singer Kumar Chatterjee presenting in his unique style Navkar Mantra dhoon, Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji gave brief introduction of Veerayatan's relief and educational activities in Nepal after the devastating earthquake in 2015.

JAINA Convention is also a traditional venue for JAINA directors and other subgroups to hold their meetings. At JAINA Director's meeting, results of JAINA elections for the Executive Committee for the 2017-2019 term were announced. Directors from all over the US and Canada in the two-hour meeting were briefed by the outgoing President Ashok Domadia of the achievements of the previous two years - addition of new member Jain centers in NY, CA, VA and Indiana and hiring of back office staff in India that will provide far more services at much reduced cost to JAINA. YJA & YJP members presented their plans for the coming years.



International Alumni Association of Shri Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya (IAAMJV) holds its general body meeting every two years at the JAINA Convention. This convention was no exception. The meeting this year was held as planned and well attended by about 50 members. IAAMJV EC briefed them about the finances, scholarship disbursements, & about the number of students who have benefited and continue to benefit from the myriad of programs run by the association. There was a lot of enthusiasm about the progress made to date & everyone showed strong willingness to extend support, going forward.

Evening program started with welcome program by Jain Center of America (NY) and Jain Center of New Jersey. It was followed by the final rounds of energetic "Jains Got Talent" solo competition. The JAINA Adult Awards were presented. The JAINA Ratna award this year was awarded to Dr. Sushil K. Jain of Metropolitan Washington DC. Since Sushilbhai immigrated as a young man with his parents, this was the first time the JAINA Ratna award was given to a second-generation Jain in the US. He accepted the award with his children, his parents and extended family. Dr. Jain, in his acceptance message spoke of the absolute need for unity among Jains and advocated evermore inclusion of younger generation into JAINA. Ten other adult recognition awards were given - (full list is available on JAINA web site). More importantly, one posthumous Adult Recognition Award was given to Late Mrs. Purnimaben Shah of Toronto, Canada who passed away in January during her 99 Yatra at Palitana. She was a valuable member of the Toronto Sangh performing, teaching and propagating various Jain rituals like Puja, Saanngi, pathshala, vastu puja, Pratistha, Pratikraman, Samayik, Swadhyay etc. not only in North America but also in India, Iraq and Zambia since 1979.

The last item of the day was the Jivdaya- Animal rights



themed play from Mumbai - Jiyo Ji Bharke in Hindi. Most of the cast members appeared on the stage in animal costumes in

a modern-day animal testing lab. In the play, the senseless cruelty administered on animals in the name of science was presented in sharp contrast with Jain philosophy expressed by the wife of the Lab director. The two-hour play was the most educational item of all the evening programs of the convention.



Sunday, July 2

As is the practice early morning of the convention is always full of religious activities. In various rooms, singing of stavans, yoga classes, Pratikamn etc. preps the participant for their spiritual journey for the day at the convention. In the Temple area, "Dev, Shastra and Guru" puja was conducted in the morning by Shree Bhattarak Charukeerthiji Swamiji, Pandit Maheshkumar Jain, Dr. Abhay Dagde and Dr. Sanjiv Godha. Also in the Temple, Mata Padmavati Poojan was conducted by Narendra Nandu, Mulchand Gala and Megh Nandu. Over 600 participants took part in the pujas.

On the main stage the first presenter was a young motivational speaker from Ahmedabad - Sajan Shah. He stirred the audience so much that demands of encore performance loudly filled the auditorium. Only after the organizers promised a second, longer appearance by Sajan Shah next day, the proceedings were allowed to continue. This was followed by a discourse by Shree Bhattarak Charukeerthi Swamiji.

Another motivation speaker Rahul Kapoor Jain from Bangluru gave his energetic presentation of "Charan Sparsh"



– as a tribute to one's parents. His emotional presentation brought tears to many eyes and a call for encore presentation!

Academic Liaison Committee of JAINA presented a seminar detailing successful launching of Jain courses in the US at more than 12 universities and installing of three Jain chairs – all during the last six years. Dr. Jagdish Sheth of Emory University detailed shift in demographics in North America and effect it will have on study of religion. He emphasized how our approaches through universities will bear long term fruits for propagating Jain Dharma. Dr. Jeffery Long of Elizabeth college also praised JAINA's initiative in this direction. The presentation drew standing applause and many people came forward to help financially to strengthen the program. This was followed by a skit by the Toronto center of the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur - a Gujju English "Kar Vichar to Paam" – based on Karma theory.

Pathshalas of America have been doing wonderful job for our youngsters and that was showcased by JAIN Academic Bowl competition. This was the first time JAINA put this most treasured JAINA activity on the main stage so that parents of kids who do not attend pathshalas could learn what their kids are missing out. Total of 13 teams consisting of 90 students from various Jain centers participated. From the Senior team, Jain Society of Houston earned the first place and Jain Society of Washington D. C. won the second place.



Among the junior team, Jain Society of Chicago came in first and Jain center of NJ came in second. Every participant and all the coaches won the hearts of everyone present in the audience.

Among the many seminars in the breakout sessions in the two convention hotels, a new initiative by JAINA – seminar on Empowerment of Women drew a lot of interest. Dr. Mamta Shaha of NY led the discussion on Physical, Mental, Spiritual and Financial health with vegetarian/vegan and cruelty free Jain way of life. About 125 women attended this seminar. Dr. Laxmi Baxi of NYU medical center discussed the physical health and precautions women should take in daily life. Dr. Nalini Juthani, Prof of Psychiatry, in discussing mental well-being of women singled out the topic of Depression for discussion. Acharya Shri Chandanaji gave her own life experiences enumerating difficulties she encountered as a woman in leading social work initiatives

and importance of strong inner health. Dr. Nirmala Hanke of Lake Whitmore - MI, avowed follower of Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji, discussed importance of daily meditation practice. Issues of Financial security and independence were presented by Jayu Momaya and Seema Jagtiani of NJ.

About 80 people attended a robust track of speakers addressing nonviolence to animals and our planet. JAINA's Ahimsak - Eco Vegan committee headed by Dr. Jina Shah from the Bay area, CA, coordinated some of the featured speakers of the track, such as Sagar Shah of the London-based Jain Vegans Working group and the Vegan Society, UK who gave inspiring and well researched talks about how UK Jain groups have decided to serve only Vegan Jain food at their events, and about the environmental and ethical harms of the dairy industry. Vandhana Bala, General Counsel of Mercy for Animals, spoke persuasively using the evidence of her organizations' investigations about how we can help end the suffering of farm animals; especially dairy cows. Dr. Jina Shah talked to a packed audience about a healthy plant based (vegan) diet and health benefits of fasting. Sudhanshu Jain talked about climate change and how Jains could lead in solving the problem with aparigraha and a vegan diet. Shaleen Shah of Luvin' Arms in Colorado talked about caring for abused animals and how our diet choices contribute to animal suffering. The youth had their own sessions too, including Binny Nanavati's talk about how cool and environmentally friendly Jainism is, and a diverse group of panelists including Anjali Doshi, Priyanka Shah, Piyush Gandhi, Hiren Patel, Dr. Tushar Mehta of Toronto and Dr. Jina Shah, addressing the transition to the vegan path (The Vegan Journey). All presentations and slide sets have been uploaded on veganjains.com website.



Evening program started with cultural programs by various Jain centers in what may be described as "Radiant dancing" and for the first time, a Bhavai (Gujarati Folk dance performance in ancient tradition) was performed on JAINA stage.

After that, the most anticipated event of the convention took place. "Yugpurush - Mahatma Na Mahatma" a play based on true life account of interaction between Mahatma Gandhi and Krupalu Dev-Shrimad Rajchandra. The play that already had performed 600 shows in various cities in India was presented in Gujarati; however due to a special initiative by JAINA, simultaneous English subtitles were projected live for members that did not understand Gujarati.

Monday, July 3

The morning program started with Live broadcast from Mumbai of a swadhyaya with Pujya Shri Namra Muni and members of the audience were able to ask questions and get answers in real time.

This was followed by Kumar Chatterjee's demonstration of Healing powers of Music/Mantra. Sajan Shah was invited again to give another motivational speech that had people on their feet.



Anekant Community Center made a presentation of humanitarian projects that can be undertaken by our centers.

In the breakout sessions after lunch, there was a JAIN Diaspora conference headed by Dr. Manish Mehta of Detroit and speakers from various countries discussed ways to leverage our philanthropic efforts and resources across 35-nation diaspora where significant populations of Jains are settled. Notable speakers at the diaspora forum were:

1. Prof. Kanti Maradia, a U.K. based scholar presented his science based studies on how the Jain Karma Theory agrees rational thinking and he proposed ways to reduce our Karmic footprint.
2. Mrs. Sharmila Oswal who spoke of JITO and Green Energy Foundation she has created to clean up Indian rivers and water shades.
3. Dr. Raja Ram Mohan Roy a Canadian engineer/Vedic scholar described his fascinating research into ancient Hindu and Jain texts including his research titled "The genius of Jain Mathematicians" with examples of complex math theories like Fibonacci numbers, calculus and concept of infinity long before western mathematicians.
4. Mr. Prafulla Parakh President and CEO of Bharatiya Jain Sanghthan based in Pune, one of India's largest Jain NGO, described their ongoing efforts in reducing farmer suicides in rural India and how their non-sectarian value based educational curricula are adopted by various state Governments.



The consensus outcome of the sixth JAIN Diaspora conference was to hold similar conferences in foreign locale, develop partnerships with NGO's and support research by Indian and western scholars in the areas identified with common interest.

Two sessions on entrepreneurship were organized by JAINA's Long Range Planning Committee (LRP) members that were attended by about 200 young professionals. One session on "Entrepreneur Boot Camp: How to Pitch your Business Idea" was conducted by Mukesh Chatter, an IT Engineer going from a startup to selling his company to Lucent Technology. He talked about how his Jain values helped him become successful and gave tips on how others can do the same

Anjani Jain is Senior Associate Dean successful high-tech entrepreneur. He shared his journey as for the MBA Program & Professor in the Practice of Management at Yale University, and Yogendra Jain who is a technologist, serial entrepreneur, and a passionate promoter of Jain Way of Life talked about how we can brand the Jainism to the layperson in the Western culture. Specifically, they gave ideas of how we can advance the values of the three A's of Jainism - Ahimsa, Anetanketavad, and Aparigraha to our friends and colleagues. The Jain doctors and health professionals met to discuss ways to advance Jain values in North America. Dr. Manoj Jain lead the session by sharing the Jain Health Professionals Directory which has addresses and emails of over 600 doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other professionals. The group discussed ways to conduct health research at future conventions and educated the Jain community on health and wellness.



After lunch, another play on the early life of Gandhiji – "Mohan's Masala" in English chronicling events in his early life that prepared him for a moral path was presented as a solo performance by Pratik Gandhi of Mumbai. The play was very much appreciated by the audience. This was followed by Ghazals and poetry based on Jain theme by Shobhit Desai of Mumbai. Elsewhere, Education Committee of JAINA held a five-hour Pathshala Teachers conference that was attended by about 45 teachers from all over the country

The evening program began with the finals of "Jain Got Talent" competition. Over 30 contestants took part ranging from 7 years child to 70 years young adult with variety of talents consisting of Comedy act, Rubik's Cube, Violin Player, Tabla players, Drums of DC Band, Poems, Singers, Dancers and many more entertaining acts. Among the solo performers, in the age group of 3 to 17 years, Labdhi Mehta (AL), Samvi Ranka (CA) and Vanshika Shah (MD) won the first second and third place. In the age group of 18 to 34, Dhaval Kamdar (NJ) won first place and Kunal Shah (CA) won the second prize. In the age group of 35 and up, Birva Shah(NJ) Seema Jain (NC) and Bela Gandhi (VA) won the first, second and third place. In the Group performance, all the winners were from Jain Society of Metro Washington. JSDrums came in first, 2Jain ZZ came in second and Fabulous 4 came in third.

The talent competition was followed by a solo Bharatnatyam dance performance by 16 year old Ayushi Haria of Chester Springs, PA. She performed a dance number depicting an event where Sangam Dev heaps rigorous harassments on Bhagwan Mahavir and how Bhagwan Mahavir remained calm, merely showing his compassion towards Sangam Dev. What made the performance endearing was her performing both roles and switching effortlessly between the two roles.



Eight JAINA Youth awards were presented in front of the curtain as the orchestra of Samir Date and Deepali Somayia prepared for their performance behind the curtain. Youth awards recipients were Aanya Gandhi of JSMW, Anish Doshi of JSMC, Chintan Shah of JCNJ, Hetali Lodaya of Jain center of Greater Austin, Ravi Doshi of JSMW, Urvashi Jain JCSC, Siddarth Shah of Jain Center of Houston and Vinit Parekh of JCSC.

The last item of the day was Bollywood Night. They helped unwind the audience after 4 days of spiritual stimulation and unwind they did. The orchestra instantly connected with the audience and soon young and old were dancing in the aisles and in front of the stage. They would have danced all night but the convention center had to be emptied before midnight so everyone dancing in the clouds had to be brought down and sent home.

Youth Programs – July 1 to 3

Special efforts were made for providing separate venue, special food menu and tailored programs for 600 youths in 3 different age groups of young Jains. After the opening ceremony of July 1, they were moved to Ellora Banquet hall where all the youth daytime activities took place. Keynote speaker for them was Dr. Tushar Mehta of Toronto where he talked about transforming experience on experimenting with Jainism in his professional life.

About 120 Kids under 14 years of age took part in Kid's club 2017- consisting of Tapovan experience by Rikin who was visiting from Kenya, Rahul Kapoor's speech on respecting parents, learning and singing stavans and learning Surya Namaskar. Age 18-23 youths over the four days attended many interesting talks such as session on Manav Sadhana, a project "Rutgers against Hunger", funding your startup by a venture capitalist followed by a highly interactive session on Social Network. They also heard from two very dynamic motivational speakers Sajan Shah and Rahul Kapoor from India and from US Army Captain Raj Kankaria on Jainism and Army - a spiritual paradox. For evening fun they had a formal night where everyone was looking like a prince and princess in their Tuxedos or dresses one night and Masala Bhangara with Sarina Jain another night.

YJP (Age group 24 – 42) – Young Jain Professionals for the first time had their own track at JAINA Convention with over 70+ participants signing up. There were multiple different sessions from professional networking to speakers that motivated and provided great insights into career. For those in the age group of 22-42, there was Jain Milan - with a focus around networking and providing a forum for people to meet with other single Jains from around the world. This year we had people who came to Jain Milan from India for the purpose of meeting other single Jains. This is the first time there were close to 400 people signed up for Jain Milan; the largest ever in the 10+ year history. The event including a visit to an off-site park was very successful providing people with an opportunity to mingle with others in a comfortable and fun environment. There was a Desi Mela and a Masquerade Ball with masks.

Tuesday, July 4

Finally, a day to bid good bye was upon us. The audience in the main hall was primed by another poetry session of Shobhit Desai who captivated everyone by switching between Hindi and Gujarati while dropping words of wisdom and gems of Dharma. All the Sadhus, Sadhwis and Scholars came on the stage to grace the closing ceremony. A very fitting end to the 5 days of the convention.

To summarize, over 70 scholars conducted about 200 hours of religious discourses at the convention that North American Jains found spiritually enriching. Every two years, JAINA brings thousands of North Americans of all sects and from all regions of India with dozens of religious leaders from India under one roof. Where else on earth could you benefit from graceful presentations of Dr. Kanti Mardia from UK, Dr. Raja Ram Mohan Roy from Canada, Dr. Sudhir Shah, Shri Abhay Firodia and Dr. Abhay Dagde from India to name just a few? What other venue presents 4 plays centered on Jain values, music of Kumar Chatterjee and motivational speeches by young Jain leaders of tomorrow – all on one stage?



This year, the JAINA convention was a 5-day event. Unlike most of the past conventions, the 19th Biennial JAINA convention was planned and conducted by JAINA without any local host Sangh sharing any responsibility. Based on past history of partnership with a local Sangh, many JAINA attendees were under the impression that this year's convention in NJ was hosted or managed by the Jain center of New Jersey. In reality, JAINA Convention committee plans were executed by 150 self-motivated volunteers from the NY/NJ/PA area. Unfortunately, the food and transportation arrangements fell short of most expectations in this convention. Past Presidents of JAINA and the current EC of JAINA have taken notice of it and are diligently working on making sure that such shortfalls do not ever happen again. In his message in the JAINA weekly newsletter JAINA President Mr. Gunvant Shah, who was the convener of the convention has offered his sincere apologies for any and all inconvenience suffered by any convention participant and repeats his heartfelt regrets here in this article. It is certain that we have to learn from the good as well the bad to make JAINA a stronger organization and grow to maintain its premier position in the Jain universe.

JAINA Conventions are a gift to the Jains of the world put together mostly by volunteers giving their Time and Treasures to keep our precious heritage alive. It is a pilgrimage that one must not miss.



Shashvataa Shree Girnar & Shatrunjay PanchTirthi Yatra January 20 – 30, 2018



*Organized by: JAINA Federation of Jain Associations in North America & Girnar Mahatirth Vikas Samiti
With the blessings of: P.P. Shree Dharmarakshitsuri M.S. & P.P. Shree Hemvallabhsuri M.S.*

What: Shashvataa Shree Girnar and Shatrunjay PanchTirthi Yatra, including:

- Vachanas by P.P. Shree Dharmarakshitsuri M.S. and other Acharyas
- Girnar 99 Prakari Puja and other anusthans at Diu Tirth and Hastagiri Tirth
- Bhakti programs and much more

When: January 20 – 30, 2018

Where: The Yatra will start and conclude in Ahmedabad, covering Girnar, Vanthali, Prabhas Patan, Diu, Ajahara, Talaja, Kadambgiri, Hastagiri, Shatrunjaygiri and other Tirths.

Cost: \$1,200 per person (\$1,001 for the Yatra; \$151 for Yatra Sangh donations; \$48 for admin fees)

- Charges are inclusive of all double occupancy lodging & boarding expenses. Accommodations will be made in new dharmasalas / 3-star hotels, wherever possible.
- All yatris are responsible for making arrangements to reach Ahmedabad.
- The Yatra will be conducted by Patani Tours, the conductors of all previous JAINA Yatras.
- The Yatra is open to NRIs and Indian residents alike – a registration package will be e-mailed upon request.

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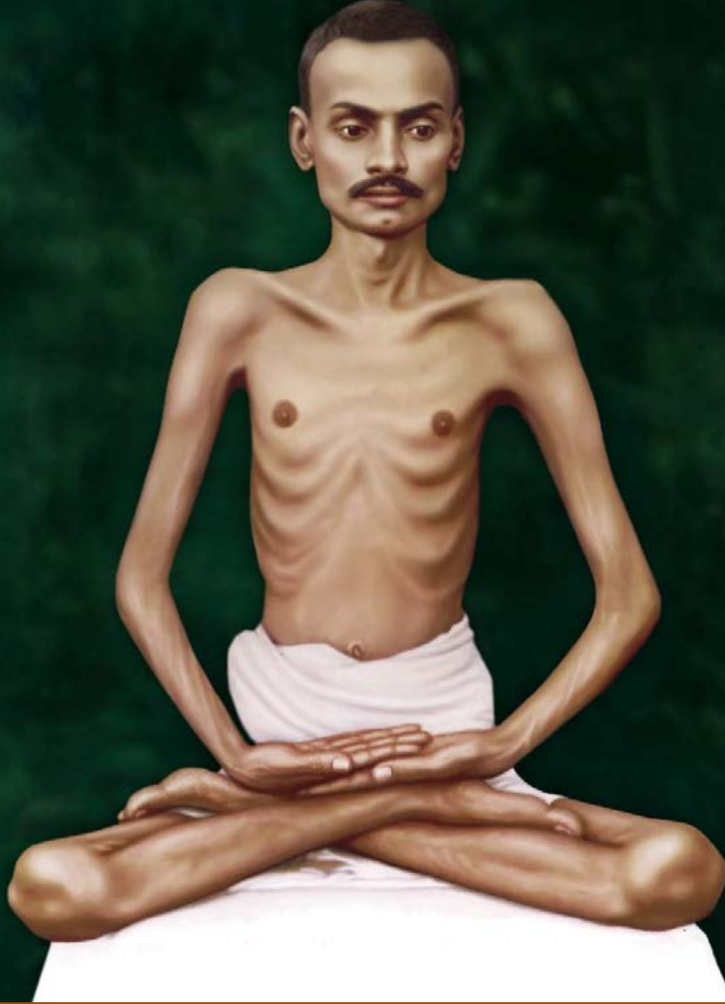
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