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Kalpavalli: Depiction of a leaf of Kalpvruksha in an intricately carved single piece of marble at the Ranakpur Temple in Rajasthan.

JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the
Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)
email: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

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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On the Cover:

Kalpavalli: Depiction of a leaf of Kalpvruksha in an intricately carved single piece of marble at the Ranakpur Temple in Rajasthan. This jewel of carving positioned above the head of the arriving pilgrim is a master stroke of the temple's architecture. Standing under the leaf, the pilgrim sees the face of Bhagwan Adinath and reaches such a level of reverence and contentment that his/her desire for spiritual upliftment is granted, without asking!

Disclosure

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

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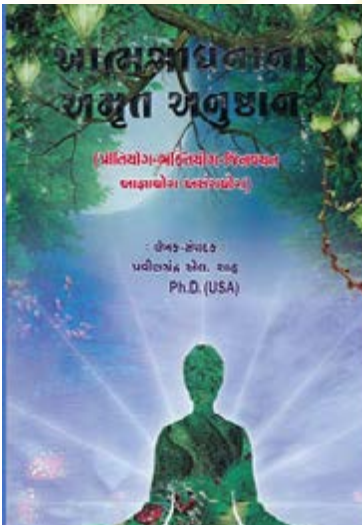


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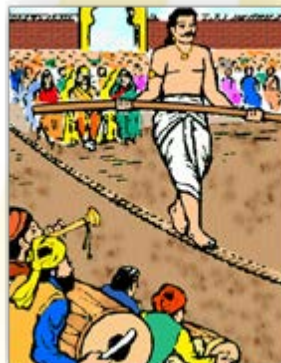


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Editor's Note



Om Shri Veetragey Namah

Jai Jinendra,

Happy New Year! The Jain Digest team wishes you all a happy, healthy, peaceful and spiritually elevating 2018.

Many of you sent us your comments and complimented us on the September 2017 issue of Jain Digest which was dedicated to Shrimad Rajchandraji. The Jain Digest team

thanks you all. We are humbled and feel fortunate that we were able to honor Shrimadji in this way.

In this issue, we continue further on the theme of "Ten Supreme Virtues" with focus on Contentment, Detachment, Self Control and Renunciation.

With the help of five articles on Contentment, we bring you various interesting perspectives written by authors from varied backgrounds. Pujya Samani Dr. Suyashnidhi tells us about how gratitude can take us to contentment. Meghaben Shah talks about our endless desires. Rameshbhai Khandhar tells us all about spiritual contentment. Sanjay Bhandari's compilation of how contentment is preached and practiced by many religions will show you how universal this topic is. We also bring you a very interesting article by an author, blog writer Leo Babauta telling his personal story and looking at contentment from various facets of our lives.

The articles on the other three virtues - Detachment, Self Control and Renunciation - convey the importance of these virtues in our spiritual journey as described in Jainism. We thank Pravin L. Shah for proving us with a scholarly article on Detachment. Anop Vora gives us valuable tips on how to achieve self control and Dilip V. Shah provides us insight in to Daan (Charity) and Tyag (Renunciation). He has also written a book report on the book written by Pravin L. Shah titled "Atmasadhanana Amrut Anushthan".

In addition, we also have a few more articles on few other topics. Sunny Jain of YJP tells us about the Jaap program conducted on a Thanksgiving Day and its impact on young Jains. We are honored to have a short article by a very renowned author, Mr. Khaled Hosseini, about his encounter with a courageous and compassionate woman in a refugee camp in Uganda. We are also fortunate to have an excerpt from the diary of Acharya Shri Ramlalji encouraging us to be research oriented when following religious rituals.

Lastly, Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur has provided us a captivating report on the Yugpurush Saardh Shatabdi Mahotsav held in Dharampur from November 2 to 5.

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

In Seva,

Dilip Parekh

Jain Digest-Chairman's Message

Jai Jinendra,

New Year is the perfect occasion to celebrate love, friendships and all the good things in life. Let's take the time to appreciate what the last year has given us and what the new one is about to bring! On behalf of the Jain Digest & JAINA Calendar committees, I wish you all a very healthy, peaceful and spiritually uplifting New Year.



Jain Digest committee is very much thankful to the donors without whose support it would just not be possible to continue publishing such a wonderful and a meaningful magazine with contents that elevates and connects Jains in North America. We are also very much thankful for the overwhelming compliments that we received towards the September publication that was dedicated to Shrimad Rajchandraji's 150th birth anniversary.

This year again, few of the Jain Digest team members had an opportunity to put together the 2018 JAINA Calendar. This year we brought you the temple art in form of the intricate carvings in marble and the majestic Maru-Gurjar architecture of the Ranakpur and Delwada Temples. I very much hope that you have enjoyed this calendar. Your feedback on the Calendar will be very much appreciated.

On the cover of the 2018 JAINA Calendar, the majestic Ranakpur temple is depicted with a rare confluence of art and devotion which is a must visit site for Jains. In fact, there is a famous Rajasthani saying: "Kutko Butko Khaje, pan Ranakpur Jaje" (Starve if you have to but must visit Ranakpur).

On the cover of this publication is the image of Kalpavalli, the finest piece of carving which is a master stroke of the Ranakpur Temple's architecture. I sincerely hope you will enjoy this issue of Jain Digest and apologize for the delay in mailing due to circumstances beyond our control. 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 can help with content development and design. Please contact us via e-mail at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com if you would like to participate in this creative and rewarding endeavor. We thank you for your continued support and please email us with your comments and suggestions which will help us improve.

Peace, Love & Happiness,

Mahesh Wadher

JAINA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Wish you and your family a very Happy and Healthy New Year 2018! With your support, we will continue to deliver on our shared vision to evolve and to promote Jain practices, educate Jain and non-Jains to create a strong Jain community, expand awareness of Jainism, and energize our community to collaborate globally to spread the message of Bhagwan Mahavir.

It is my privilege to share with you a number of events our community has organized over last few months. Here are the highlights from some of the events:

- JAINA Education Committee and Jain Study Center of North Carolina have jointly organized second three days' workshop in October 2017 in Raleigh, NC. Workshop theme was "Striking a Balance: Examining Social, Cultural, and Spiritual Environment" that our youth face while growing up in North America. (Link to photos: [http://www.jainlibrary.org/\\$workshop3/02_jain_workshop_photos_2017.pdf](http://www.jainlibrary.org/$workshop3/02_jain_workshop_photos_2017.pdf)) The Education Committee is planning another workshop in Atlanta during March 2 to 4, 2018.
- Diwali Stamp released - Diwali is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains throughout Canada and around the world. To mark the occasion, Canada Post and India Post have released our first joint issue of stamps and other collectibles. On the occasion, Hon. Deepak Obhrai, P.C., M.P. congratulated Canada Post and India Post for jointly issuing two stamps to celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Lights. This is done in the year of Canada's 150th anniversary.
- The International Summer School for Jain Studies (ISSJS) is an annual academic summer program that began in 2005. The current program is intended to provide students and scholars with the opportunity to pursue Jain studies and non-violence (ahimsa) in India from June 08 to July 29, 2018.
- On October 11, 2017, the Institute of Jainology (IoJ) held its 16th Annual Ahimsa Day hosted by the Jain All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) at the House of Commons (HoC) in UK. The Jain APPG was organized as part of the IoJ led 'One Jain', representing the 30 Jain community organizations.
- JAINA at Capitol Hill on Diwali 2017 - JAINA Delegation led by President Guntant Shah visited Capitol Hill in November, 2017 for Diwali Lamp Lightning ceremony. The day culminated with Diwali celebration at the famed Kennedy Caucus Room in the Russell Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill joined by other organizations. Along with the President, JAINA was well represented by Haresh Shah (Secretary), Dr. Sushil Jain (Past President), Heta Shah (Mid East Reg. VP) Jigar Shah (JAINA Director), Mahavir Jain (JAINA Director), Deepak Nagda, Kamlesh Shah, Sharad Doshi and others.
- Jainism Added to High School Textbook in California - Jainism was for the first time added to the California's History Social Science textbooks framework in 2016 due to the efforts of Jain and Hindu community members including JAINA's Girish Shah and immediate Past President Ashok Domadia, organizations including Jain Center of Southern California, Hindu American Foundation and Hindu Education Foundation.
- JAINA is examining establishment of Canada office so that our Canadian members can be served better.
- The JAINA delegation recently visited India to participate in many Jain Community events. To read a detailed report of this visit, see the article beginning on page 7.

JAINA is embarking on new heights with your love and support. To keep up to date with JAINA activities, I request you to sign up at jaina.org to receive the weekly Newsletter from JAINA.

Looking ahead, 2018 promises to bring Jains together globally and spread knowledge of Jainism as never before.

Guntant Shah
President

JAINA DELEGATION 2018 TO INDIA

By Gunvant Shah, JAINA President

Many JAINA members go to India in January for family reunion or pilgrimage or just fleeing the harsh winter of the North America. January is also the month when many NRI friendly activities take place in India. It was my privilege to witness several Jain organizations in Ahmedabad, Kutch and at Rajgir (Bihar) below is a brief report of my days in India.

- JAINA Seminar at Ahmedabad - JAINA & L. D. Institute of Indology jointly organized the second annual seminar in



JAINA at LD. Institute of Indology in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad on 17th January 2018. The theme for 2018 conference was 'Jain Yoga'. Acharya Shri Nandighosh Suri, Dr. Jitendra Shah, Director of L. D. Institute, Padmashri Dr. Sudhir Shah; a Jain Scholar and a prominent Neurologist and Dr. Abhay Doshi of Mumbai University spoke on the various aspects of Jain Yoga. The day-long conference was attended by about 200 people including JAINA President Gunvant Shah, Secretary Haresh Shah, Past President Dilip Shah, Chairman of the Pilgrimage Committee Rohit Doshi and many other JAINA members. I talked about activities of JAINA's different committees like Calendar, Jain milan, Jain Digest, Education, Jain Youth Exchange Program, Jivdaya committee's projects specially this year, Girnar Yatra, JAINA Convention, etc. and how JAINA could work with the Institution.

- Ranakpur & Mt. Abu Tilth: We took a 2 day trip to visit tirthdhams of Rajasthan. We presented 2018 JAINA Calendar to the office of Ranakpur Temple and the manager there admired it so much. He told us that he had not seen such wonderful photography of Ranakpur Temple ever. Later we visited Delwara Temples on Mt. Abu and Jiravala.
- JAINA Yatra to Girnar and Palitana We visited the group of JAINA Yatris at the Hathesingh Temple in Ahmadabad, as they were getting ready to embark on a 10-day Pilgrimage. 2018 is the 20th year of JAINA Pilgrimage Committee.
- Medical Camp in Bidada - Bidada Survoday Trust is a charitable non-profit organization, well known for the month long Medical Camp it has been organizing in the month of January for the past 25 years in Bidada, Kutch. The organization is committed to render medical and surgical treatment to patients of all ages, caste & race. Many North American doctors with specialty in various fields provide voluntary service at this camp. As is their tradition, its Chairman Vijaybhai Cheda invited JAINA President and officials along with local political leaders and other dignitaries to inaugurate the dental camp this year. Dr. Girish Shah from Long Island, New York was in charge of the Dental camp. We were invited to visit and observe the Dental Camp in action. Later on Vijaybhai organized a function to honor JAINA President, dignitaries and the donors and gave bouquet of flowers.



JAINA at Dental Camp Inauguration at Bidada



- Veeraytan at Rajgir – The JAINA delegation had a privilege to celebrate Republic Day of India and 82nd Birthday of Acharya Shri Chandanaji at Veeraytan, Rajgir. After breakfast, everyone gathered around Indian National Flag post where Acharya Chandana Shriji, Sadhavijis, Dr. Abhay Firodia, Gunvant Shah and many other dignitaries hoisted the national flag followed by speech from JAINA President and other dignitaries.

Later, the event was followed by a speech from dignitaries around the world, Acharyashriji, Dr. Abhay Firodia, Gunvant Shah and others. On behalf of JAINA, I mentioned how Acharya Shriji has worked towards social upliftment across the globe through Seva, Shiksha and Sadhana, how JAINA and Veerayatan can work together make this



JAINA: celebrates Republic Day of India and 82nd Birthday of Acharya Shri Chandanaji at Veeraytan.



JAINA at inauguration of Tapovan Sanskarpith Annual Cultural Program at Riverfront, Ahmedabad.

world a better place to live, how today's problems of non-violence can be solved by simple principle based on Jainism 'Live and Let Live'. JAINA announced a donation of Rs 151,000 for Veeeyatan's Pawapuri School.

Gurudev Shri Amarmuniji had inspired Acharya Shri Chandanaji to dedicate her time and limitless energy to uplift humanity in the name of Veerayatan.

- Shikharji Jatra - On our way to Veerayatan we did Shikharji
- JAINA President was invited to light the lamp and inaugurate Tapovan Sanskarpith Annual Cultural Program performed by their students on February 10th at Riverfront, Ahmedabad. The cultural program included Gymnastics, Karate, social drama and various other items.

jatra and visited Panchkalyanaks of Bhagwan Mahavir. JAINA team started their Shikharji jatra, the place where twenty out of twenty-four Tirthankaras attained salvation, around 5:00 am after bowing down at Bhomiyaji temple and completed around 7:00 pm. There are 31 tunks in total.

- Mahamastakabhisheka, the head anointing ceremony of the Bhagwan Bahubali, is observed once every 12 years in the Digamber Jain tradition. The next Mahamastakabhisheka of this ancient, over one thousand thirty-five years old Statue will be performed in 2018 during the period of February 17th to February 25th, in Shravanabelagola (Karnataka), India. The day of February 21st, 2018 has been set aside as a special day for the NRI's to perform Abhishek of Bhagwan Bahubali. NRI's will be provided special facilities and arrangements are being made for Lodging and Abhishek etc. They are expecting over 500 - 1,000 NRI's across the world to join.

A Unique Art Festival in Shravanabelagola, India

By Rajiv Pandya



Shravanabelagola is one of the most prominent Jain pilgrimage centers located 145 kilometers from Bengaluru. The small town of less than five thousand people is known for the world's tallest, 57-foot-high monolithic statue of Lord Bahubali. The area is steeped in history that goes back over 1000 years and rich in art and architecture. Every twelve years, the statue of Lord Bahubali is anointed with holy water, milk, turmeric paste, coconut water, 8 types of sandal paste and different type of flowers in a ceremony called the mahamastakabhisheka.

The concept of Mahamastakabhisheka at Shravanabelagola dates back to the time of the very installation of the Bahubali statue. The First Mahamastakabhisheka took place in 981, the year of installation of the statue. This year, the event is being held from Feb 17th to 26th under the leadership of Swasti Sri Charukeerthi Bhattaraka Swamiji of Shravanabelagola. Almost 4 million visitors are expected to visit Shravanabelagola in February 2018.

A unique fine arts festival and exhibition is being held at Shravanabelagola this year on the occasion of the to showcase history and heritage going back a thousand years. The festival is being organized in three phases starting with an artist's camp in January (25-28th of January), followed by an exhibition between February 17-26 and finally



a gallery roadshow across major art galleries in India. The festival is an effort to bring the art, architecture, history and heritage of Shravanabelagola and Bhagwan Bahubali on canvas in a modern, contemporary style. Organized under the auspices of the Shravanabelagola Mutth and with the blessings of Swasti Sri Charukeerthi Bhattaraka Swamiji, the festival is collaboration between many renowned and upcoming artists, prominent art galleries and patrons from India and across the world.

The story of Shravanabelagola as unique as it is inspiring. According to the inscriptions at the base of the statue of Bahubali, it is said that the then king Rachamalla's Commander-in-Chief Chavundaraya's mother, Kalala Devi, saw a huge statue of Gomateshwara in her dreams. She vowed not to eat until her dream was realized. Chavundaraya decide to build the statue of Gomateshwara at Shravanabelagola, a site already sanctified by the Jains. Another legend has it that Chavundaraya arrived at this place overshadowed by two hills, Chandragiri and Indragiri, with a pond in between, on his way to pilgrimage with his mother. In a vivid dream, Chavundaraya saw himself shoot an arrow from the summit of Chandragiri to the adjacent hill, as directed by Kushmandini Yakshi and the figure of Gomateshwara flashed from the spot the arrow hit. Following this he commissioned the curving of the same image from a

granite monolith between 980 and 983 AD. The valley between the two hills around the pond was named Shravanabelagola ('Shravana' meaning saint; 'Bel Gola' meaning white pond).



The art camp was organized from the 25th to 28th January and more than 40 artists came to Shravanabelagola to create paintings inspired by the art, architecture and history of Shravanabelagola and Bhagwan Bahubali. Several well known artists from south India took part in the art camp and visited various temples at Shravanabelagola. A beautiful opening and closing ceremony was organized in Shravanabelagola where all the artists were felicitated by Swamiji.

The camp will be followed by a live painting demo during the mahamastakabhisheka when artist will paint while the daily Abhishek of the statute of Lord Bahubali takes place. All the paintings commissioned during the art camp and live demonstration will be exhibited in a specially designed art gallery. The festival will be followed by a roadshow across major art galleries in India to further promote the still untold story of

Shravanabelagola. Proceeds from the sale of artwork will be donated to the Shravanabelagola Matth for restoration of local art and architecture and to support upcoming artists in India.

Inspired by the vision of Mrs Pushpa Pandya, from Indore, India, who is an accomplished artist herself, the project is being brought to life by the generosity of several sponsors in India and the United States and led by her sons Rajat and Parimal Pandya. Rajat and Parimal knew they could create something truly unique that combined their passion for the arts with their spiritual connection with Shravanabelagola!

With the mahamastakabhishek coming up, this is a truly unique opportunity to tell the story of Shravanabelagola! The team's goal is to support the art community in India and support the Shravanabelagola Matth in their charitable pursuits in the region. We'd love for you to be a part of it. You can help spread the word, contribute to the cause or pre-book a painting for yourself!



For more details check
www.sbgartfestival.com
 or email
sbgartfestival@gmail.com.





Contentment as a Supreme Virtue in Jainism

By Megha Shah

(Meghaben Shah is a pathshala teacher at Jain Society of Houston.)

“He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have.” Socrates

Often in our life, we have that one thing, that, if attained would give us happiness.

As a child, it was that one toy. Oh, if only I could get that one toy, the child thought, I would be the happiest. Lucky that the child was, he got it. Was he the happiest?

Maybe or maybe he “thought” he was happy until! If only I could top the grades this time, the same child thought, I would be the happiest. With hard work and luck, he did top. Was he the happiest now?

Maybe or maybe he “thought” he was happy until... If only I could get that job, the same child who was now a young adult thought, I would be on top of this world! Again with luck and hard work he got the job. Was he at the top of the world?

What happened to the previous states of happiness he had felt? Did they matter or will this newly experienced happiness matter? That one thing that we always strive for throughout our lives, to which we hang on to as our single source of happiness. What is it? Is that one thing our source of happiness or is our endless desires our source of unhappiness? If that one thing was our source of happiness, then our desires should have ended as soon as we obtain that one thing. But it doesn't happen. Therefore, we can conclude that our desires are our source of unhappiness.

What exactly are desires? All our lives we are so focused on the external. External meaning external body, external people, external things and external situations. An old woman would say, “All I want is to see my grandchildren and children happy and I can die in peace”. She is focused on external people. A young man would say “All I want is good money and good family and I can lead a happy life”. The young man is focused on external people and external situations. And so on and so forth. But obtaining any external things do not end our desires. Hence one can say that desires always arises when we are focused on the external.

If focusing on the external causes desires, and desires are the source of unhappiness, then what should we do to obtain happiness? That is where Jainism comes in. Jainism gives us a new perspective that we failed to see but that is the key to our happiness. Contentment!

What is contentment? According to Jainism, contentment is the true nature of

the soul's conduct. What is soul? What nature are we talking about? Soul is that which asked this question. It is that which we cannot see but realize from our own experience. It is the opposite of the external. Since focusing on the external is the source of our unhappiness, Jainism always tries to bring us to our inner selves. Instead of focusing on external body, external people, thing or situations over which we have no control, Jainism makes us focus on our inner self.

Jainism does not directly stop us from desiring things and situations. It just changes our perspective to focus on our inner selves or our soul. Therefore, the time spent on desiring external things is now spent on focusing on our soul. And as a person delves deeper into the soul, they realize that everything that they were looking for outside is really within the soul itself. It is the soul that has the infinite happiness that we were wandering for. And once the soul starts enjoying its own happiness, there is no need or desire for external things anymore. A person who reaches this desireless state of the soul can be called as contented.

Why is contentment a virtue?

A contented person is the one who recognized the soul's true potential and therefore became Arihanta or Siddha. Therefore, Arihanta or Siddha are those souls that have reached the highest level of contentment.

Those souls that have reached a high level of contentment but still have very few desires are on the path to become Arihanta. These are the Acharyas and Munis. The only desire they have left is to attain Moksha or Salvation. They do not have any other desires left. And all their activities are related to their own desire of attaining Moksha. These are the people who spend all their time in virtuous activities such as reading scriptures, meditating, fasting and praying. The people who are at this stage are worthy of praying to.

Even souls like us who have worldly affairs can have varying degrees of contentment. Why do crime such as theft, hurting someone or killing occur? All these arise due to the intense desires a person has for external things. Hence we can conclude that the more contented the person is, the better he/she is. Contentment is a virtue because it not only helps to become a better person but helps in creating a better society as a whole.

Therefore, contentment is a supreme virtue in Jainism.





Self Control for Spiritual Progress

By Anop R. Vora, Rochester, NY

Anop Vora is involved in Community services and Promotion of Professional Education in the Jain Community. His current interests include: Listening to the Spiritual Discourses, Meditation, Reading and Writing on the religious topics. e-mail: vora5000@yahoo.com

One day, Lord Buddha was walking through a village. A very angry and rude young man came up and began insulting him. "You have no right teaching others", he shouted. "You are as stupid as everyone else. You are nothing but a fake."

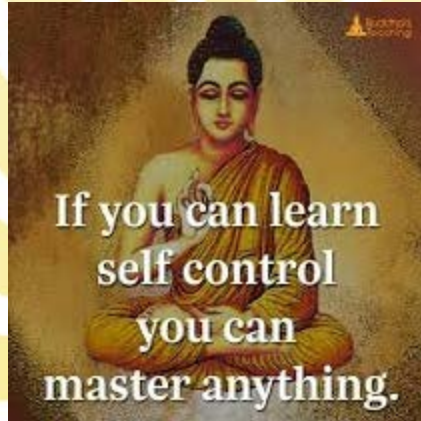
The Lord was not upset by these insults. Instead, he asked the young man "Tell me, if you buy a gift for someone, and that person does not take it, to whom does the gift belong?" The man was surprised to be asked such a strange question and answered, "It would belong to me, because I bought the gift."

The Buddha smiled and said, "That is correct. And it is exactly the same with your anger. If you become angry with me and I do not get insulted, then the anger falls back on you. You are then the only one who becomes unhappy, not me. All you have done is hurt yourself. If you want to stop hurting yourself, you must get rid of your anger and become loving instead. When you hate others, you yourself become unhappy. But when you love others, everyone is happy."

The story above shows the depth of self-control the Buddha had developed within. It is very similar to the stories from the life of Lord Mahavir. Their self-control stemmed from Right Perception, Right Knowledge, Right Conduct and several years of religious practices. This was the reason why they were able to reach the spiritual heights.

What is Self-Control?

Self-control is the control of the mind, speech, body, and senses to lessen the internal desires and stay calm when external stimuli come up. What are the internal desires? They are mainly worldly desires such as running after money, power, fame, recognition, health, beauty and many others. Most of us spend the whole life time trying to satisfy these never-ending desires to make us happy only to realize that we were chasing a pipe dream. Our spiritual masters have told us repeatedly that happiness we were seeking so disparately was within and not outside; but we have ignored this basic truth and repeatedly made the same mistake of going after a mirage.



External stimuli are quite common in worldly life as we interact with people, situations, and objects. How do we react to these interactions? Unless we have extensive practice in equanimity, we would most likely react with the emotions of anger, ego, deception and greed and related passions and get swept away. First, we lose the control over mind and then the control over self. Our scriptures tell us that our desires and mindless reactions are the products of deep rooted conditioning and ignorance. It is keeping us away

from making any genuine spiritual progress. Unfortunately, most of us are either not aware of this phenomenon and even when we were cognizant of it, we chose to ignore it.

Why do we need Self-Control?

If we aspire to make any spiritual progress or accomplish any goal, we must first realize the importance of developing self-control and then take pro-active steps to achieve it. This requires rigorous discipline, time management skills, and continual awareness of how we think, speak and act. Without a disciplined approach, the mind will lack the focus, get absorbed into distractions and miss the target. If we allow the mind to wander into the future, we may soon be overwhelmed with worries, anxieties and wild imaginations. We have to learn to be in the present moment instead of wasting our time in brooding over the past and worrying about the future. We need to be mindful and act judiciously when an unpleasant situation arises. We need to remember the karmic process and act with an attitude of "glad acceptance" where appropriate. Self-Control will help us in all these aspects and keep us in the



present moment and resulting awareness will make it easy for us to make spiritual progress. The question is: how do we acquire this frame of mind?

How to achieve Self-Control?

1. First, Jainism has identified 5 major sins that every Jain must renounce-each for the entire life through a vow-partially or fully depending upon one's spiritual level. Those sins are: violence, falsehood, stealing, engaging in lust and accumulating excessive wealth. It also asks us to give up gambling, meat eating, adultery, alcohol and hunting. The mind that is intensely occupied in committing these major sins is too far removed from spirituality. For this individual, mind control or self-control is very difficult. One cannot build a castle without a good foundation.
2. Next, to complement the vows above, the scriptures ask us to start limiting the area of physical activity, minimizing the use of consumable and non-consumable items and avoiding meaningless thoughts, speech and acts.
3. Next, the religion has prescribed several powerful tools to change us from within. It has described 4 reflections (Bhavnas) to improve social relationship and additional 12 reflections to develop detachment towards the world, our physical body, and the associated objects and to become aware of the reality of human life. These reflections in a way would give us a third eye to change our perspective and make us see the world in a different light. In addition, it has identified 10 virtues worth developing to dilute our emotions and passions. Knowledge of Karma Theory is also very useful in better understanding of the events and people in our lives. All of these tools are structured to generate tremendous power within to control mind, speech, body and senses; leading to self-control.
4. At a more advanced level, our seers have strongly recommended mindful meditation. Once we sit down, make our body quiet, observe total silence, we can observe our mind closely and become aware of the flood of thoughts spinning in our mind. If we can maintain this awareness for a longer time and then divert our mind to assimilate Lord's teachings, it will transform us, calm us down and thoughts & emotions will start subsiding. This will pave the way for us to get close to soul consciousness where we would discover a huge reservoir of peace, contentment, happiness and compassion. This is the level of self-control on a sustained basis we should be aiming for.

Pause and Introspect



We should study our life style consciously and identify the useless stimuli that are constantly bombarding our minds. In the modern age, one can easily think of emails, text messages, TV, phone calls, social media, news media so on and so forth. Obviously, we do need them to some extent; but beyond that point, they do not serve any useful purpose. If anything, they keep our mind running non-stop after the worldly matters. This is sheer madness. We should limit their use and utilize the freed-up time for spiritual development.

If we examine our life from a broader perspective i.e. from a macro level, we may discover that most of us run around either fixing the daily problems or satisfying the demands of mind-originated desires and ambitions, allowing very little time to reflect and think. We do not take time to think in terms of big picture and therefore wind up spending most of our spare time on items of little significance in the long run. We need to ask ourselves: What is the purpose of life? Is it just to accumulate material objects or is there a larger purpose? The answer to this question must come from within and it will happen if we remain in solitude for a longer period when the mind is tranquil and makes a connection with our soul.

Finally, self-control and ensuing spiritual progress requires a lot of time to introspect, experiment with different ideas, and zeroing on something that works for us to eradicate our unique conditioning. If we analyze the lives of great religious leaders, we will find that they used this approach in one manner or the other. It appears that the common denominator in their lives was the ability to meditate or to become 'still' for an extended length of time; allowing them to reshape their thought processes culminating into inner transformation. If we follow this path, our spiritual progress would also accelerate much faster than we ever imagined.

Detachment: Necessary Virtue for Spiritual Growth

By Pravin L. Shah



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

The first Agam text Acharang Sutra has a very powerful and inspiring statement of Lord Mahavir: “Je Egam Janei se Savam Janei” - meaning one who knows his soul (experiences the self) knows every thing. In the age of internet we are all so attached and addicted to social media, our smartphones, money, power, and worldly objects to boost our ego that we have no time or inclination to know ourselves, why I am in this bondage, and how to end the bondage? In this article I would like to explain the power of detachment (Vairagya), which is a necessary virtue for spiritual growth and self-realization.

Classic texts of Acharya Kundkund’s Samaysar, Upadhyay Yahsovijayji’s Gnansar and classic epic of Shrimad Rajchanadra’s Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra describe five key attributes to attain self realization: equanimity, burning desire for liberation, detachment, compassion, and right faith. When detachment virtue is cultivated properly, all the other four virtues develop simultaneously.

Attachment and Ignorance:

Acharya Haribhadra in his revered text Yogdrashti Samuchay describes worldly soul as “Bhavabhinandi soul” meaning:



- 1) Having a strong attachment to worldly objects for pleasure seeking
- 2) Living in total darkness of delusion with ignorance of the true Self

Let us explore these further.

1) Seeking pleasure from worldly objects has been with the worldly soul from time immemorial. Since the happiness gained from such objects is temporary by nature, the person’s desire is never fulfilled completely and he continues to suffer through cycles of birth and death. Let us illustrate this with an example.

In a small village in India, there was a very naughty monkey who went to each house and broke all glass vessels and pots. The villagers were fed up of this monkey and sought advise from a wise man. The wise man found a large glass jar with very narrow opening and put some peanuts at the bottom of this jar. He then installed the jar with peanuts on a platform with glue under a tree where the monkey used to hang out. Once the monkey saw the peanuts, his favorite food, he put his hand in the glass jar and made a large fist to pick up lots of peanuts. He then tried to pull his hand out of the jar but could not get his hand out, as the fist was large and, filled with peanuts. He struggled for an hour to get his hand out but did not succeed because he did not want to let go of the peanuts! At that point the wise man asked a young man to catch the monkey and together they put him in a cage to stop further damage. In short the message here is that we are all like that monkey seeking pleasure in worldly objects (peanuts in his case), accumulating karmas and are stuck in cycle of birth, old age, misery, and death.

2) What is the root cause of such attachment to worldly pleasures? Attachment to the worldly objects is due to lack of true knowledge of Self or *Atma*. It is our wrong belief or delusion that I am this body, and the thoughts and feelings are mine. And hence anything that gives pleasure to our body and mind – no matter how temporary – attracts us, and we spend all our time in acquiring one thing after another. We develop strong feelings of ownership of things such as house, cars and the bank balance. Any change in “my possessions” makes us miserable. Any misfortune or loss of our worldly

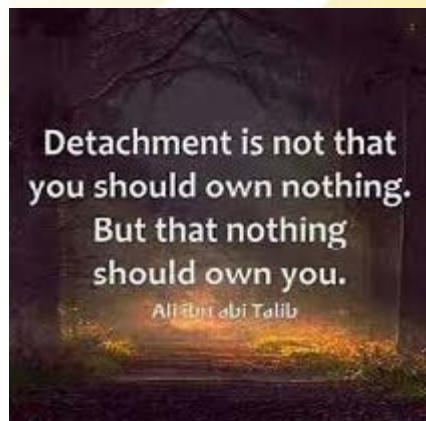
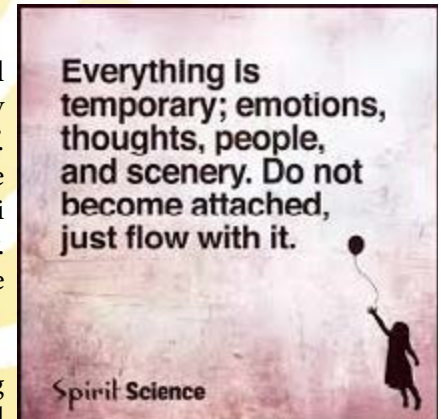
belongings can send a person in depression, shock, illness, and death. This is all due to ignorance about the true self, unawareness about the true everlasting happiness. In reality, the happiness lies only in the true self. Self-knowledge and truth can free us from this bondage or attachment.

How to achieve Detachment?

Lord Buddha declared this noble truth: "All suffering is from attachment; the real happiness comes from detachment". Eckhart Tolle describes this process very beautifully in his classic book, "A New Earth – Awakening to Your Life's Purpose". Jain text Samadhi Sopan describes twelve Bhavnas very effectively to develop true detachment. Mahatma Gandhi's life is the most illumining story of a Karma-yogi how to live detached from all outcomes based on Bhagvad Gita's life time study. Raman Maharshi's life is a shining light to live as a fully detached witness of the present moment.

Developing genuine authentic detachment is not easy and it starts with acquiring Samyak Gyan or Right Knowledge by devoting to the teachings of self realized master and living a simple life in obedience of his Sadguru. One needs to get rid of all the conditioning of mind based on false ego and immerse in true self-knowledge with contemplation and meditation of the true self.

Detachment can become easy once we recognize our own true self that is: eternal, blissful, unchanging, and ocean of happiness. We need to be able to separate our true self from our physical existence, the body. Once we are able to do that then everything that relates to the body – thoughts, emotions, feelings – can be witnessed, resulting in detachment from them. This brings inner peace and contentment and realization that true happiness is within us. This in turn leads to detachment from external objects since there is no desire to seek happiness from them.



Here are some suggestions about how to develop true detachment:

- 1) Genuine efforts by a seeker to study spiritual texts with open mind by both eastern and western authors is useful in understanding the nature of ego and body-mind identification. Examples of such texts are New Earth by Eckhart Tolle, Walden by Henry David Thoreau, and Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra by Shrimad Rajchandra etc. to learn how to discriminate from non-self to self and learn to melt away the ego and to live simple life in harmony with the universe. False ownership towards worldly objects needs to be replaced by understanding the infinite potential of soul that leads one to liberation and infinite bliss.
- 2) Value system - based on ego and hanging on to the worldview that material objects and wealth are the only source of pleasure - needs more intense treatment for a seeker. Step one above is good start but most of us cannot solve the terminal illness of "ego based mentality". Shrimadji's Atmasiddhi clearly states that a seeker needs to surrender to a self realized master to develop true detachment based on right knowledge from his master.
- 3) As a seeker "retrains" his belief and value system based on the teachings of his master, and utilizes his time in introspection, contemplation and meditation, practices being a witness to events, thoughts & feelings, a divine light will spark at some point where one truly experiences inner joy from self-realization and the attachment to worldly objects will just drop out as material things are devalued by the seeker.
- 4) Fellowship with other disciples – Satsang - is equally important on a regular basis to develop detachment (Vairagya) and equanimity.

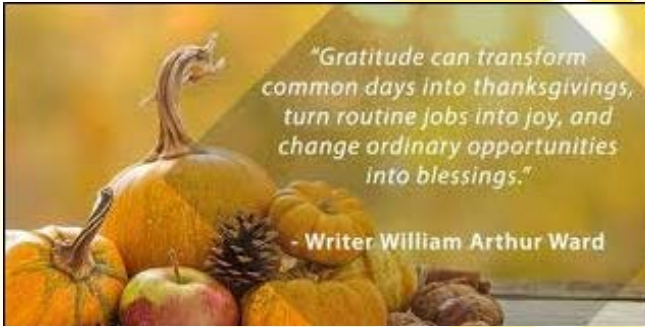
Gratitude - A way to achieve Contentment

By Jain Samani Dr. Suyashnidhi (JPP, Bangalore)



With the blessings of Pujya Gurudev Dr. Shri Padamchandra Ji Maharaj Saheb, Samani Dr. Suyashnidhi got initiated as Jain Samani on May 15th, 2010 at Mysore, Karnataka and is currently rendering her services to humanity through J.P.P. Ahimsa Research Foundation. She has MA and PhD degrees in Jainology, both with a Gold Medal. She is well versed with Jain Anuppeha Dhyana Yog Sadhana, past life regression, Reiki, Pranic healing and other alternative techniques. She presents her lectures, workshops with a message that Jainism is a way of life; it is simple, easily practicable. e-mail: suyashnidhi27@gmail.com

Gratitude possesses the great ability to break huge spiritual-barriers and the special ability to reduce the mundane transmigration to a very large extent. As gratitude is an emotion expressing appreciation for what one has; as opposed to focusing on what one wants. Gratitude is getting a great deal of attention as a facet of positive psychology. One can deliberately cultivate gratitude and increase our well-being and happiness by doing so. In addition, gratefulness and especially, expression of it to others, is associated with increased energy, optimism, and empathy.



Being grateful can reduce stress and unworthy tension loads. Often the focus is more on that which is hoped for, if only we forget to recognize all the other things we have in our lives to be thankful for. Gratitude is the readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Most important of all gratitude is also an unspoken acknowledgement of faith, which Jainism names as Samyaktva. The unconditional gratitude shown by a devotee towards his/her benefactor is directly proportional to the intensity of faith in the benefit he/she is sure of getting. Gratitude in Jainism is not based on the received benefits, nor does it rely upon expectations, but is the reciprocation of the knowledge that the omniscient provides. There is no greed, there are no wants, there is no craving.

Harvard Medical School defines gratitude as: "A thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals - whether to other people, nature, or a higher power."



Mundane life is like a roller-coaster with many ups and downs. Embracing each situation, be it happiness or pain requires a greater understanding to bring in a great thought that a person or situation is just an instrument to make one learn a lesson. The karma of an individual is solely responsible for all the circumstances he comes to face. But person forgets the reality and this gives rise to the blame game. Since many life times we have been playing victim-victimizer game and there is no end to it till we develop the attitude of gratitude for the advisory sermons of the Omniscient. Attitude of Gratitude is the entry point to elevate the deepest hidden potentiality of the Self.

Looking at it from the scientific point of view, ungratefulness or non-appreciativeness piles up negativity (identified as Ārtha Dhyāna) in the body and mind creating chemical imbalance in our brains. Depression and anxiety is caused by such chemical imbalance leading to sleeplessness, decreased immunity, increasing susceptibility to various diseases. Person becomes vulnerable to emotional hypersensitivity compromising the emotional personality. Whereas gratitude helps to raise the level of mental and emotional serenity without which obtaining harmony in thought and action will be challenging. The art of being happy lies in the power of extracting happiness from common things; and this can be achieved by gratifying each aspect of life. Ambition and Contentment are the night and day of man's life-journey. Gratification could also be a major issue in a two-faced mental disorder-cum-attitude as suggested by the various synonyms for contentment: complacency, content, contentedness, ease, equanimity, fulfilment, gladness,

gratification, peace, pleasure, repletion, satisfaction, serenity, etc. Attitude-struck two-faced feeling is one sign of the onset of depression and is a spreading loss of the sense of gratification in such immediate things as friendship, jokes, conversation, food, enjoyment, etc. On the outset, long-term gratification may seem even more meaningless, while by contrast, man can find gratification in almost anything, even a leaf falling, or seeing it crush, for example.

This ungratefulness or lack of appreciation piles up Ārtha Dhyāna, which gives way to germination of seeds of fresh bondage by blossoming Passions (kashāyas); the prime source of karmas. Father of most sins is greed, better known as Parigraha. Wanton needs and wants born out of dissatisfaction lays the foundation of all passions. Greed is a negative tendency born out of insecurity and scare of the future that leads to unjustifiable accumulation of wealth, making the person more materialistic and non-contented. This non-contentment gives rise to more passions (kashāyas). Obstacles appearing in the path of achieving fulfilment of greed lead to anger. Accumulations inspired by greed brings ego. Enhanced accumulation motivates fraud/deceit and other non-ethical practices. The human nature is a mixture of rational and irrational forces, with there being many different social, psychological, religious definitions to Gratitude.



Resolving a malady becomes easier if the root cause of that problem is properly understood. Attitude of Gratitude

when practically applied in life, brings the sense of contentment. When there is contentment, there is no room for fresh expectations, in turn no room for appearance of disappointment. Positivity in thoughts, speech and action can be achieved as a by-product automatically.

I remember when I was in our Anatomy class in first year at my dental school, required to sit right in front of a preserved cadaver, the entire class assembled around it. Some of us fainted, our eyes were watering due to the irritation, burning sensations were felt all over the face and many odd things were happening to most of the students around me. I was almost unaffected and immersed in the contemplations of the state of the human body lying there in the middle. Life

force differentiated the value of this body. Remembering the teachings, I received from my guru – parama-pujya Munishri Dr. Padamchandraji Mahārāj Sāheb, my mind pondered over the ephemeral nature of all forms of the Universe-forming six Substances (the ShadDravya). A deep sense of gratitude flashed in my heart as that ShadDravya – a lesson Gurudev taught me earlier, helped me now, face the strange circumstances involving the cadaver, without slightest of discomfort or disgust. This then elevated my feelings of detachment towards the outer world aiming for an altogether different kind of contentment.

Well placed gratitude shifts the level of consciousness. Correlation of material substances i.e., jada-vastu and Chaitanya, the life-force; the distinction between body and soul is better understood when this feeling of gratitude arises from depth of the heart. The assumption of rationality leads to the misunderstanding of procrastination.

The third sthāna, fourth Uddeshaka of Jain Scripture, Sthānānga Sutra under para number 67 reads:

tihamduppadiyāram samanāuso! Tamjahā – ammāpiuno, Bhattissa, Dhammāyariyassa| suppadiyāram bhavai

“It is not easy for one to retrieve obligation from three benevolences. 1) Parents, 2) The Master and 3) Teachers.”

The favour of Parents, is non-commended. Even if one were to serve parents in various possible ways, taking care of their health,

massaging their bodies with most expensive of oils, yet one cannot match the degree of gratefulness he/she owes to them. Secondly, the Master, is said to be the one who nurtures, nourishes and trains, one into the practical world, be it parents, another kin, a guardian or any gratifying person; one can never repay the priceless attributes rendered by such benefactor. Thirdly, the Guru, who instils the beneficial invaluable knowledge, ethics and the true road-map to salvation. Yet, one can seek contentment of repayment to some extent, the Lord says, if the beneficiary, is able to stabilize his/her benefactor in the path of true religion, the Truth/Reality that leads to Salvation.



Spiritual Contentment

By Ramesh K Khandhar



Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of executive board and a past Pathshala teacher at Jain Center of Southern California. His current activities are: conducting swadhyay on various Jain scriptures, reading and contemplating on spiritual scriptures, listening to the spiritual discourses and visiting several religious ashrams in India for 3 to 4 months every year. E-mail: ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com

(The ancient Greek philosopher and scientist Aristotle said, "Happiness is self-contentedness." The Greek word for happiness is Eudaimonia; however, it refers to "human achievements". Hence, the focus of contentment here is related to material things. Although it is very important to be content with what we have; which can be termed as "material contentment", we also need to consider "spiritual contentment". This article elaborates more on these concepts.)

Material Contentment:

In ordinary sense, material contentment can be defined as satisfaction. It can even be considered as a way of life. When an individual is satisfied with his life situation and accepts his condition, he will enjoy his life in a calm manner and usually not get influenced by external forces. He can experience moments of joy and happiness in such circumstances, but these will last only for a short time. The joy and happiness dependent on external factors will not lead to inner peace. One must understand and realize that material life cannot give you everlasting happiness. With focus on material life, the attention is always directed outwardly taking you away from your inner true self which is the fountain of bliss, happiness and all other desiring virtues. The root cause of longing external material life is 'desire' which is the byproduct of ignorance of nature of our own true self.



The person can improve his so called material contentment by practicing, counting one's blessings, avoid bad company, think

twice why one wants to have more and more. But these alone will not lead to spiritual contentment. A person can be happy without being content, in which case there will be short lived moments of happiness in a discontented life.

Spiritual Contentment:

For spiritual contentment, one has to search within. Deep down within you it resides! As a matter of fact, it's you, you are the truth! One must know that the human body is not the true self. When one's attention is focused inward, one witnesses consciousness without name, form, concepts; and experiences the inner peace that leads to bliss. Being in love with nature of one's true self is spiritual contentment. The supreme virtue of contentment arises when the awareness is focused inward and to become one with True Self. This is the state of consciousness - the spiritual contentment! Afterwards, even when one's attention is in worldly matters, one remains contented from within.

Spiritual Contentment is beyond one's objective world as well as one's mind. It is connected with one's subjective world, the, inner self. In Jainism, inner peace is considered a state of consciousness or enlightenment. It is a state of no-mind, and a state of consciousness. When there is contentment, there is no ego, or 'I'. There is only contentment.

The material happiness is influenced by external factors. One may be content with one's job, health, finance, kids, relationships, even social status and yet one may not be content with one's inner self. It isn't a matter with being content with one's situation in life; but is a matter of being content with what one has based on deeper understanding about the nature of True Self. The spiritual contentment is a form of inner happiness, and bliss which is not influenced by external factors. One is neither the body, nor the mind; but is the pure witnessing consciousness. And when this witnessing consciousness is touched, the contentment - the inner self is realized.

Desire - the root cause of Discontentment:

What makes it difficult to be content? In one word: Desire! The desire for material happiness. It means:

- Being greedy for more and more.
- Being discontent with what is, with the present.
- Seeking happiness in your hopes for the future.
- Complaining that all is not as it should be.
- Wishing for more than what your destiny has given you.
- Thinking that you could have made a better world.

It is so obvious that desiring is 'ignorance'. Non-desire is wisdom. Having no desires means a state of contentment, living each moment totally and contentedly.

Spiritual Contentment is Inner Peace:



When soul is free from desiring, totally detached from external worldly objects then the surface of innumerable pradesh of consciousness becomes still, tranquil, without

any vibrations whatsoever caused by external attachment. Then one hears the anahad naad 'Om' in that stillness. And that is the inner peace – intrinsic attribute of soul. That is when one feels oneself as 'I'm a pure, peaceful and powerful soul'. That is transcendental peace! And that is the spiritual contentment.

Inner Peace means a state of inner health, a state of inner wholeness, where one is not torturing others, not torturing oneself, where one is neither interested in happiness nor in unhappiness. One is simply interested in being absolutely silent, calm, quiet, collected and integrated. The mind contains one's whole past, all that one knows and all that one has accumulated. Mind is one's subtle treasure and possession. When all that has been dropped and one has entered into a state of no-mind, a great inner peace descends. It is silence, that is full of bliss.

Spiritual Contentment – A Foundation to achieve Liberation:

According to Jainism, a spiritual seeker that wants to progress on the path to liberation, needs to develop ten supreme virtues such as forgiveness, humility, contentment, renunciation, detachment, etc. The inner peace or spiritual contentment – which is also one of the ten virtues – is the foundation on which other virtues are developed. Let us explore this further.

Once one has experienced the profound state of inner peace, one can be among people & be performing the normal daily social activities, but remains detached from the worldly activities. A spiritual person controls nothing, (s)he represses nothing, (s)he understands, tries to understand, and not to control. (S)he becomes more meditative: (s)he watches his/her anger, desires, greed, jealousy, & possessiveness. (S)he watches all these poisonous things that surrounds one. (S)he simply watches, tries to understand what anger is, and in that very understanding (s)he transcends. One becomes a witness, and in this witnessing, the root of anger, Mohaniya Karma melts as if snow has started melting after the Sun rises. This is the virtue of Renunciation (Tyag).

When all past experiences have lost its impact, have become ineffective, and the mirror of consciousness is left without reflecting the past, or future expectation; then there are no objects to focus on, to think about, to feel; when there is no content around you; the pure witness remains. Meditation has something to do with consciousness and not with content. The content is outside and meditation is the inward journey to realize the blissful nature of consciousness. Bliss shall be realized only when one is totally content with outside, with what one's destiny has brought to one and when one is one with one's Inner True Self. That is the state of non-attachment, or the state of spiritual contentment. This is the virtue of Non-attachment (Akinchanya).

The word Brahmacharya is derived from the word Brahma – soul and charya to dwell. Brahmacharya means to dwell in one's soul. Only by residing in the soul is one the master of the Universe. Residing outside one's soul makes one a slave to desires. The spiritually contented person has his attention focused inward on the attributes of True Self. One remains a witness to all external happenings. There is no place for lustful ambitions and sensual pleasures. He dwells in the nature of True Self. That is the true meaning of Celibacy (Brahmcharya).

The purpose of penance is to keep desires and passions in control. Penance leads to an influx of punya karmas. However, contentment prevents the rise of desires and passions in the soul. In a deep state of meditation even the desire to intake food does not arise. Mind has been purified so that the desires and passions don't arise even under adverse conditions. Accordingly, Penance (Tap) is inherent in spiritual contentment which also leads to Self Control (Sanyam).

With contentment, one accepts each unfolding moment without any desire to react or change the outcome. One strongly believes that 'whatever happens, happens for a reason and happens for good'. There is total harmony among one's thoughts, speech and action. There is no need to be deceitful or lie for personal benefit under any circumstances. This is the virtue of Supreme Straightforwardness (Arjava) as well as Truthfulness (Satya). The attainment of liberation lies in humility and compassion. 'Glad Acceptance' of all happenings in life – good and bad - with true understanding develops the virtue of humility. A person has a true appreciation for all that is good and noble and is compassionate towards those that are less fortunate. Being content with oneself and no doer-ship, there is no desire to boost the ego or put others down. This is Humility (Mardava).

When one realizes spiritual contentment, one's right belief perceives all other entity- living and nonliving, totally innocent and secondary cause in one's life events. Out of spiritual contentment, true understanding arises that all unfavorable events seemingly caused by external objects are in fact the fruition of one's own past karmas. With this deeper understanding comes the forgiving nature. In reality, the question of forgiving just does not arise and that is the Forgiveness (Kshama).

It is only through the spiritual contentment that the fruition of k& will be null and void and that will stop the influx of new karma. At the same time, the dormant karmas lose their intensity and duration. Thus, the spiritual contentment and its practice annihilates all karmas and leads to liberation.

Contentment – A Virtue Revered by all Religions

Compiled by Sanjay Bhandari



Sanjay Bhandari is one of the Jain Digest editors. He has his own software consulting business. He has served as a Publication Officer at Jain Society of Greater Detroit and has also been a part of the fundraising events and other community activities. His current interests are: traveling, photography, music, movies.

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There is saying... *We choose whether we are happy or not.* Contentment is a mental or emotional state of satisfaction maybe drawn from being at ease in one's situation, body, and mind.

If the person can find the contentment in what he already has instead of wishing he had something else, then he can lead a meaningful and successful life. Contentment can be closely associated with the concept of happiness and satisfaction that might contribute to living a good life. Finding happiness in little things leads to a better life and contentment. A person can be content in life by staying grateful to God, taking a control of his/her attitude, helping others, and by not comparing himself with others. "Contentment is natural wealth, luxury is artificial poverty." Contentment provides spiritual life, reduces your stress level, improves your outlook, relaxes your body, and makes your life enjoyable. There is an unmistakable freedom that accompanies contentment: a freedom to be who you are, enjoy who you are, and live the life you were destined to live.

We did some research on what various religions have to say about Contentment & found some interesting & inspiring facts:

BUDDHISM



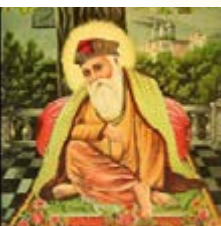
Buddha has said once: "Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship."

Buddhists believe genuine happiness is achievable now and by everyone. Matthieu Ricard, author and Buddhist monk, says, "We usually look outside for the causes of happiness". Unfortunately, our control of the outer world is limited, temporary, and often illusory. There is a misconception in people's mind that contentment arises solely from the external conditions. In fact, it is our mind that translates outer conditions into happiness or suffering, and, even though it may not be easy to transform one's mind, it is something that lies within the reach of our capacities."

In a Buddhist sense, contentment is the freedom from anxiety, want, or need. Contentment is the goal behind all goals because once achieved there is nothing to seek until it is lost. A living system cannot maintain contentment for very long as complete balance and harmony of forces means death. Buddha's task was to find the solution to his never-ending descent into dissatisfaction, or *Dukkha*. Contentment is something we can learn, meditate, and practice by telling our self that I am content. For Buddhists, the best thing to practice contentment is to find happiness from inside, stay positive, prepare our self for any external adverse conditions, and have a patience of voluntarily accepting the sufferings from day to day life situations. Quoting Dan Buettner, "Gratitude always comes into play; research shows that people are happier if they are grateful for the positive things in their lives, rather than worrying about what might be missing."

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happiness#Eastern_religions

SIKHISM



Contentment (or Sabar or Santokh) is an important aspect in Sikh life and is known as "Attainment of the First Treasure". Sikhism categorizes Contentment into two forms: Contentment (Santokh) and True Contentment (Satt Santokh/Sabar). Contentment can be broken, turning souls greedy for the temporal world, but True Contentment is never broken and such a soul is eligible for the Supreme State. The soul having contentment is called Saabari or Santokhi. Contentment can be practiced by spiritual living, compassion towards humans and animals, having forgiveness, gratitude and love for others, and being thankful to the god for what has been given to you.

Guru Nanak says that once you practice an essence of contentment, satisfaction with whatever you have, then it is one way of talking a giant leap towards god. Contentment means that you are totally accepting what has been given to you and you are not complaining, as dis-satisfaction leads to misery, frustration, depression, and anger. Once you have contentment, then that is the real spirituality and then you will not take any bad actions to satisfy your greed. Guru Nanak further pointed out that one must not find faults with others but one should be concerned with how well they are behaving themselves. One has to find friends and connect with them through their virtues and not according to their shortcomings or imperfection and focus upon the good things that they bring to you.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uu8tUfLLT18>

JAINISM



According to Jainism, if a person accepts success and failure, pain and pleasure, sickness and health, union and separation, and victory and defeat as a part of corporeal existence, then his/her passions are mild. This leads to contentment and peace. Jains practice contentment in their life by staying happy and satisfied with what they have.

Jains understand that materialistic things might give a temporary pleasure for a time being but the real pleasure and peace of mind is in making the best use of what they have and staying away from accumulating unnecessary material things. Most of the Jains practice to keep away from any kind of greed, such as money, power, fame, and pleasure of five senses. By keeping ourselves contented with what we have brings less worries and stress in life, gives us internal happiness (which cannot be bought with money) and we gain more control over our mind and desires. Jains believe that by showing kindness to others, staying thankful for what we have during bad times and lending the help to others during our good times, will give us more satisfaction and contentment in life. On a contrary side, Jain should not be contented with the spiritual activities that takes them towards higher spiritual state and strive for liberation.

HINDUISM



In Advaita Vedanta, the ultimate goal of life is happiness, in the sense that duality between Atman and Brahman is transcended and one realizes oneself to be the Self in all. Contentment means completely happy with, or satisfied with, accepting, and comfortable. It is the habit of being able to accept circumstances one finds self in, without being upset, of accepting oneself, and of equanimity with others who are balancing their own needs as they share what they have. Contentment is a necessary virtue because it frees a human being from the compulsions of all bondage, manipulation and fears.

Brahmakumari Sister BK Shivani says that protecting yourself from negative energies, staying positive, controlling anger will make you a contented person. If we are content and positive within our self and accept what we have, then we can also keep others happy and satisfied. One should be contented with what he/she has and strive for betterment and excellence in the future. If you practice and cultivate contentment within yourself then your body will be healthy, your mind will be stable, and everything around you will look good to you. Whatever adverse situation comes, for a contented mind, maya (illusion) and situation will look like a puppet show.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kbcF0NuEFw>

CONFUCIANISM



Confucius says - "To be truly happy and contented, you must let go of the idea of what it means to be happy or content. When you understand there is really nothing to be happy or sad about, then you will be truly contented."

More specifically, he mentions the experience of intoxicating joy if one celebrates the practice of the great virtues, especially through music. Confucius's contentment is to place more values on moral and spiritual pursuits than on material enjoyment. Wealth does not make rich happy, but contentment does.

Contentment is not about getting what you want. It is not about fulfilling desires. It is about knowing that you are truly already full. It lies within, it pours forth, and it is much more about giving than getting.

Source: <http://wisdomeverywhere.blogspot.com/2008/06/confucius-say.html>

JUDAISM



There is a very popular saying in Judaism - Who is rich? - The ones who are happy with their portion.

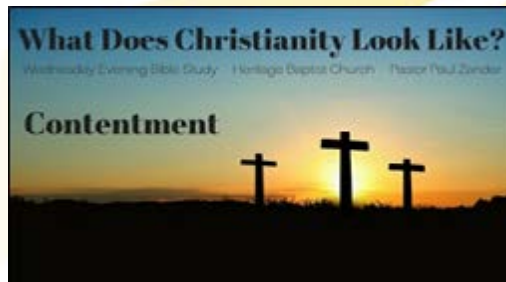
The origins of contentment in Jewish culture reflect an even older thinking reflected in the Book of Proverbs which says: "A joyful heart makes a cheerful face; A sad heart makes a despondent mood. All the days of a poor person are wretched, but contentment is a feast without end.

Whoever seeks more than he needs hinders himself from enjoying what he has. Seek what you need and give up what you need not. For in giving up what you don't need, you'll learn what you really do need.

Happiness, or simcha, in Judaism is considered an important element in the service of God. When people practice contentment in their life, they are more capable of serving God and going about their daily activities than when depressed or upset

Source: *Wikipedia and others*

CHRISTIANITY



Contentment is one of the greatest privileges of the Christian faith. The Bible has a great saying about Contentment – "Being satisfied with what we have, who we are, and where we're going". Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" Jesus says to content with what you have and not to worry about the materialistic things in this world. Solomon, the wisest and richest man who ever lived, said, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his

income". If we are faithful then God will cause all things to work together for our good. Christians believe that to worry means we do not trust God. The key to overcoming our discontentment and lack of faith is to find out who God really is and how He has been faithful to supply the needs of His people in the past. Such study will grow one's confidence and trust for the future.

If money can't buy contentment and poverty doesn't provide it, what is contentment and how is it attained? In Christianity, contentment, contrary to popular opinion, does not mean being satisfied where you are. Rather, it is about knowing God's plan for your life, having a conviction to live it, and believing that God's peace is greater than the world's problems.






Here are the following steps in learning Christian Contentment:

1. Don't expect God to give us contentment but it is something we must learn and put into practice.
2. We should be able to distinguish those things that are eternal from those things that are temporal.
3. Establish a habit of having a pleasure in giving.
4. Develop a grateful attitude and be thankful to God and your family and friends for what they gave you.
5. Reject a fearful spirit, seek God's will and stand up to fear.

Contentment is not something that must be searched for and found. It is an attitude of the heart. Once the attitude has been modified and all has been transferred to God, contentment will be evident. When we acknowledge that it is God in control, not us, we can then find peace and learn to be content

Source: <https://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/christian-contentment.htm> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQnDspcukO8> & others

Does happiness depend on the amount of money we have?

Mr. Smart's Investment Adventure	Mr. Smart's Emotional State
Dec 1998 – Mr. Smart got a bonus of \$5,000 He invested that money in the stock market	
March 1999 – Investment grew to \$8,000	
June 1999 – Investment further grew to \$10,000	
July 1999 – Investment dropped to \$8,500	
Sept 1999 – Investment dropped to \$7,000	

Why did Mr. Smart feel so miserable?

- **Expectations:** He expected the money to keep growing.
- **Attachment:** He got attached to the money.
- **Greed:** He wanted even more.
- **Ego:** He felt proud about his investment decisions when the stock market was up. And then when the market dropped, his ego was hurt for not cashing on the gain.
- **Ungratefulness:** He was not grateful for the 40% gain he had on the money he did not even have 10 months ago!
- **Forgetting the role of Karma:** He forgot that what he had was the result of his good karma.

The moral of the story is: **Be content with what you have, be grateful and be watchful of your ego!**

“One, who washes away the dirty heap of greed with water of equanimity and contentment, attains everlasting happiness”

The Incredible Power of Contentment

By Leo Babauta



Leo Babauta is an author, blog writer. He lives in Davis, California. This article has been taken from his blog post on “zenhabits.net” published on April 2, 2008. Zen Habits is a blog written by Leo about implementing zen habits in daily life. It offers suggestions for how to live, and also includes frequent references to how Leo has implemented these habits. He covers topics such as simplifying, living frugally, parenting, happiness, motivation, eliminating debt, saving, eating healthily and successfully implementing good habits.

“If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.” – Cicero

While many readers have noted my efforts and articles on self-improvement, what I haven’t stressed as much is the beauty of becoming content with what you have and who you already are. I’m definitely a goal-oriented person — I always have my eye on a goal, whether that’s writing a book, running a marathon, improving my blog, waking early, losing weight, or one of a dozen other goals I’ve had (and usually achieved) in the last couple of years. And once I’ve achieved a goal, I begin looking for another: now that I finished my second marathon, I’m already looking for a third.

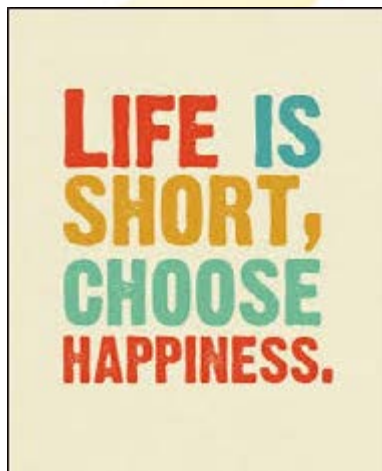
So isn’t that a contradiction? Doesn’t that seem to indicate that I’m not content with my life? Not at all. I’m extremely content with my life, with what I have, and with who I am. I have accepted that I am the type of person who will always be striving for a goal, the type of person who enjoys a challenge, and who enjoys the journey. It’s not the goal that matters to me — it’s the journey to get there that is so fun. And I’m content with being that type of person.

So contentment isn’t a matter with being content with your situation in life and never trying to improve it. It’s a matter of being content with what you have — but realizing that as humans, we will always try to improve, no matter how happy we are. If we don’t, we have given up on life. Today I’d like to discuss contentment, and the amazing things it can do in all aspects of our lives. And then we’ll look at a few tips for getting to contentment.

“Happiness is self-contentedness.” – Aristotle

My Life

I’m going to use my life as an example here, only because I’m more intimately familiar with it than any other life. Looking back, I wasn’t always content. There have been times in my life when I wasn’t happy, when things seemed dismal, when I wish I had more. I wasn’t content with the way things were, and now I know that my outlook on life was a major contributor to my unhappiness.



We choose whether we are happy or unhappy. Read that sentence again if it’s not already something you consciously practice in your daily life. If you’re unhappy with your life right now, I will venture to guess that it’s because you’ve chosen to be unhappy. That sounds harsh, but in my experience, it’s completely true. I cannot speak to whether this concept of happiness applies to everyone — especially clinically depressed or those with similar disorders, people who are starving or homeless, people who have undergone massive tragedies or abuse, or others in such circumstances. However, for most readers, I believe the principles will apply.

You might say, “But my life is crap! Of course I’m going to be unhappy!” And I hear you: I’ve had those times when my job wasn’t going well, when my relationships weren’t going well, when my finances were very bad, when I was overweight, when my life was a mess.

But listen to this: I’ve had those conditions at several points in my life. And sometimes, I was unhappy in those kinds of conditions. And others, I was happy and content. So, I’ve come to the conclusion — and it’s proven true time and again — that it’s not the conditions that make me unhappy, but my choice of thoughts, of attitude, of behavior.

What behaviors and thoughts and attitudes were different between my times of unhappiness and happiness? When I was unhappy, I focused on all the bad things in my life. Not only that, but I continually thought about how bad they were, and would complain, and would ask, “Why me?” I would let myself sink into inaction and eventually depression. I would be grumpy and cause those around me to be unhappy. That, in turn, only made the situation worse. It certainly didn't help my job.

Let's look at the times of happiness, in contrast: I focused instead on the good things in my life. Because while I had problems at my job and with my relationships and with my finances and health and all that ... there were still good things. At least I had a job! At least I had someone who loved me! At least I wasn't sick! At least I wasn't bankrupt and homeless! I counted, instead, my blessings. I do this when things aren't looking so good, and it turns me around. I had a wife and beautiful children. I had the power to change my job. To simplify my life. To get out of debt. I had my health, even if I was overweight. I lived on a beautiful island with gorgeous beaches and wildlife and greenery. I had family around me who loved me. I had the power of my words, and my books that I loved reading. I had life!

And this outlook on life helped me to be happier. It improved my relationship, because I tried to appreciate my wife. It improved everything around me, in short — and we'll take a closer look at those things next. I was happy, despite my conditions, because I chose to be happy. I found contentment in what I already had, instead of wishing I had something else, instead of being discontented with what I had. Contentment not only made me happy, but it transformed my life in many ways. Here's how.

Happiness



This is perhaps the most obvious area affected on this list, because many people see “contentedness” and “happiness” as one and the same. In many ways, they are, but it's really a matter of focus. When you're happy, it's really a state of being, influenced by a number of factors, including contentedness.

Contentedness, on the other hand, is a matter of being satisfied with what you have. It focuses on what you have and don't have, instead of just being a state of being. It influences happiness. However, you can choose to be content, just as you can choose to be happy, and if you choose to be content, you will be happy.

There are many ways to become happy — you can become happy by doing certain things (running, getting into Flow, sex), you can become happy because you are loved or in love, you can become happy because you just won a competition or a million dollars. Being content is just one way to be happy, but it's a great way.

Simplicity

Simplicity, of course, means many things to many people, but for me contentedness is at the core of simplicity. It's about being content with less, with a simpler life, rather than always wanting more, always acquiring more, and never being content. Simplicity means examining why you want more, and solving that issue at its root. At the root of wanting more is not being content with what you have. Once you've learned to be content, you don't need more. You can stop acquiring, and start enjoying.

Now, I won't claim to never want stuff. I wanted a Macbook Air and I got it. It's helping me to write this post and this book right now. (However, in my defense, I waited more than a month before buying it to make sure I needed it.) But while I am not immune to wants, I have learned to catch myself now and then, and to examine why I want something. And then I try to tell myself that I already have everything I could possibly want and need. And that contentedness leads to simplicity.



Finances

Really this is the same as simplicity, but I wanted to show it from a financial angle. The reason we get into financial

trouble, oftentimes, is that we buy more than we can afford. And the root of that buying is, buying things we want instead of only things we need, and the root of that is not being content with what we already have. Finding contentment with the stuff you have and with a simpler life can lead to buying less, to buying things we need instead of want, and to only spending what we can afford. I know this first-hand, as uncontrolled spending led to debt for me, and contentedness led to me getting out of debt.

Relationships

Many times, it seems that we're never satisfied with our significant others. They don't behave how we want them to. That's often at the root of relationship problems, as many-headed as those problems may seem. Instead, learn to be content with the person you love, just as they are. This isn't always easy, as we are usually trained (by our well-intentioned but never-satisfied parents, and others around us) to do just the opposite — to try to change people. However, you will only find trouble if you try to change your significant other. You might get them to change their behavior (but most often not), but they will be unhappy, and in turn the relationship will suffer.

I will admit to having a problem with this at times, but when this happens, I try to remind myself to love my partner as she is, for who she is. She is a beautiful person, just as she is now, and there is absolutely no need to change her. This has always led to a better relationship for me.

Kids

As mentioned above, parents are often not satisfied with their children. They need to be cleaner, better behaved, better in school, more organized and studious, more courteous and kind and compassionate, better groomed and better at sports. Well, that leads to the relationship problems mentioned above, later in the kids' lives, as they have learned to never be satisfied with others and to try to change them.

It also leads to inferiority complexes in our children, in unhappiness, and in bad relationships with them. Instead, we should learn to love our children unconditionally, to accept them for the people they are, and to let them know this through not only our words but our actions. Accept children for who they are, and they will be happier, and so will you.

Jobs

Should we be content with our jobs? Well, I won't say that you should stick with a dead-end job and a boss that treats you like dirt. If you're unhappy with your job, change it. That's been my approach and it's worked for me.

However, I have learned that being a content person in other areas of my life, and being content with my life in general, has generally helped me at any job. Discontented people tend to be complainers, or grumpy, or negative. That leads to problems at the job. People who are content tend not to complain and tend to have a more positive attitude, and in my experience, that almost always leads to more opportunities, both within the job (promotions, new projects, etc.) and outside the job (job offers, networking, etc.).

Social change

I've heard some writers say that people like me, who preach happiness and contentedness and a positive outlook on life, are teaching people to accept social injustice and not strive for change. I disagree completely, and as someone who would like a freer society than the one in which we currently live, I have given this much thought.

My favorite social disrupter, Gandhi, had two seemingly contradictory quotes on the subject of contentedness. The first: "Man's happiness really lies in contentment." And the second: "Healthy discontent is the prelude to progress."

This might seem confusing until you look at how Gandhi brought about change. He was discontent with the system of oppression in his country, so he sought to change it. However, he was content as a person, with who he was and what he had in his personal life. This inner content allowed him to have the inner power to face (and eventually beat) the very powerful authorities in his country at the time. He could face them because nothing they could do to him could take away his happiness. They could take away all his possessions, throw him in prison, take away even food, and he was content.



Man's happiness really lies in contentment.

— Mahatma Gandhi —

AZ QUOTES

He taught his fellow countrymen the same lesson, to make the best of what they had in India (making their own simple clothing, making their own food) instead of wanting the commercial goods from foreign countries. Being content with such simplicity would give them the independence from foreign commercial powers, and eventually (as they are part of the same organism) foreign political powers.

So social change can still happen if you are content with yourself, with your life, but not content with the system of oppression around you. This system, in my opinion, is responsible for holding us down, for the deaths of millions of people in Third World countries ... but it isn't until we learn to be content with what we have, and free ourselves of our dependence on commercial goods, that we will be able to change the system for good.

Getting to Contentment

So if contentedness is so great, how do you get there? That's not always easy, but here are some things that have worked for me:

Count your blessings. I mentioned this above, and in a previous post, but for me it's the best way to get to contentment. When you find yourself unhappy with something, or with what you don't have, take a moment to count all the good things in your life. And I would bet there are many. It puts the focus on what you do have rather than what you don't.

Stop, and remind yourself. When you find yourself unhappy with someone, or trying to change them, stop yourself. Take a deep breath, and remind yourself that you should try to be happy with that person for who he/she is. Take a moment to think about the good things about that person, the reasons you love that person. Then accept their faults as part of their entire package.

Stop, and consider why you want something. When you feel the urge to buy something, think about whether it's a need or a want. If it's a want, take a pause. It's good to wait 30 days — keep a 30-day list ... when you want something, put it on the list with the date, and if you still want it in 30 days, you can buy it). Consider why you want something. Are you not content with what you already have? Why not?

Take time to appreciate your life! I like to reflect on my life, and all the good things in it, on a regular basis. I do this when I run, or when I watch the sunset or sunrise, or when I'm out in nature. Another great method is a morning gratitude session — think of all the things and people you're thankful for, and thank them silently.

Show people you appreciate them. It's good to appreciate people, but it's even better to show them. Give them a hug, smile, spend time with them, thank them out loud, thank them publicly.

Breathe, and smile. Once again, advice from one of my favorite monks, but it works in this context. Sometimes when we take the time to breathe, and smile, it can change our outlook on life.

Learn to enjoy the simple things. Instead of wanting to buy expensive things, and spend money on doing things like eating out or entertainment, learn to enjoy stuff that's free. Conversations and walks with other people. Spending time outdoors. Watching a DVD or playing board games. Going to the beach. Playing sports. Running. These things don't cost much, and they are awesome.

“God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.” – Elizabeth Barrett Browning

“A burning passion coupled with absolute detachment is the key to all success”

- Mahatma Gandhi

Daan (Charity) & Tyaag (Renunciation)

By Dilip Shah



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All religions preach Daan (Charity) as an essential duty of their followers. Some religions even command from their members a certain percentage of the income or savings for the downtrodden. Often charity projects are put forward to promote welfare of the society. Sometimes charity is needed by even the most powerful or rich people in the event of large scale natural disasters. Person providing charity may be doing so out of compassion, need for recognition or using tax laws to shelter one's income. Whatever the motivation, it is obvious that throughout history, glorious examples of generosity have been recorded and recited to inspire others to come forward by religious, social or political leaders. There are even organized businesses, nonprofit or for profit (for a fee), promote goals of various charitable entities. Sometimes one hears of mismanagement of funds raised; but people in their heart, have a tendency to share their good fortunes with those who need help.

Jain teachings have somewhat different perspective on daan. Upadhyay Shree Yashovijayji has penned "Daanbatrisi" – describing daan dharma. Of the four types of Dharma – Daan (charity), Sheel (code of conduct), Tap (penance) and Bhav (high motivation) daan is given the first mention. There are four main types of Daan: Anukampa Daan, Supatra Daan, Abhay Daan and Gyan Daan.

it ends up resulting in a low quality Punya. In the act of giving, hands that receive are below the hands that give. It is important that such positioning does not produce feeling of superiority. That is the reason Daan is best given in secret (Gupta Daan) rather than publicly.

Anukampa Daan is driven by compassion and is mostly an act of temporary relief that may be administered – providing worldly needs; and the benefit to the recipient is in direct proportion to the amount given. This may include Aahar Daan (food) or Aushadh Daan (medicine)

Supatra Daan is addressed to someone who is at a higher spiritual level than the giver. It is an act of honoring that person. The idea behind Supatra Daan is to aspire to become like the recipient. In Supatra Daan, the donor may receive more than he gives. Supatra Daan generates – Punyanubandhipunya – utmost meritorious karma that may become the cause for Nirvana – Moksha to the giver. There are 7 categories of Supatra Daan: Sadhu, Sadhvi, Shrivak, Shrivika, Jinagam, Jinmandir and Jinbimb (Jin Pratima).

Abhay Daan is removing fear of the recipient. Every leaving being loves life and fears death. The one that guarantees protection in the current life is Abhay Daan.

Gyan Daan is teaching others about Jain scriptures. One unique feature of Gyan Daan is that it is not a zero-sum game. The donor does not give up what he or she gives. It is the only thing in the world that grows every time it is given. Of the four categories, Gyan Daan is most meritorious. Tirthankars, Gandhars and monks provide it by their teachings to show the right spiritual path.

It is important to differentiate the two categories of recipients. It is true that all souls are of equal value but the donor must be aware of spiritual level of the recipient. A spiritual person is deserving of our respect and not our compassion. Whereas a meritless person may deserve our compassion but not our reverence.

"Updeshprasad" lists five desired qualities in the act of giving Daan: Tears of joy, positive vibrations, respect for the recipient, saying kind words and appreciation for the opportunity. It also lists impurities that may make daan a worthless activity. Disrespect towards the recipient, delay in giving daan, detachment, improper words and the most important – regret after the act of giving.



Daan that is enabled by one's wealth, is considered the lowest form of Daan. If it is given with best of intentions and without any expectations in return, it results in a high quality Punya – meritorious karma. But if daan is given with hidden motivation or expectation of worldly reward,

Daan is intended to benefit someone. It is a dependent activity. It requires three elements. First, the donor must own the property he intends to donate. Next, the donor must be ready give up the ownership and lastly there needs to be a recipient. Until all three elements are present, Daan is not possible.

The act of giving charity is supposed to elevate the donor by reducing his sense of possessiveness towards his possessions. It is to awaken him to Aparigrah - one of the three precious Jain principles.

Daan is a doorway to cultivating ultimate goal of Tyaag – renunciation. It is important to understand the difference between Daan and Tyaag. Daan may have been given to show off, to gain favors or for a selfless reason out of compassion. Tyaag is intended to benefit one's self. It is the ending of attachment or repulsion towards physical and emotional possessions.



Tyaag is born in recognition of worthlessness of objects or desires whereas Daan is of things that the donor may consider precious or useful. Tyaag maybe or may not be of something one owns. It does not require ownership and it does not require a recipient. One can give up consumption of something he truly loves – liquor, milk, sweets or give up something he detests. One can commit to celibacy or to giving up gossiping. Tyaag is a self-reliant activity. It is a tool for Karma Nirjara (Shedding of accumulated karma). Since every aspirant wishes to shed Karma, it is important to develop the virtue of Tyaag by reducing our attachments to external things.

Here are some major distinctions between Daan and Tyaag.

	DAAN	TYAAG
1	Is an activity that generates Punya (or meritorious Karma) or Paap (bad Karma) if he indulges in pride for donating.	Is for Karma Nirjara – Shedding of Karma
2	Even after giving, one may continue to accumulate further wealth or replaces what he gave with his wealth.	Renunciation means never to aspire for it again.
3	Is for making the life of someone better as in sheltering someone or providing medical treatment	Is for making one's own life better
4	One donates useful or beneficial things. For example, Money, clothing, food or	Renunciation is of the undesirable objects or desires. One gives up attachments that are cause of bondage.
5	Donor has a duty to see that donation is used for intended purpose. For example, If he gives scholarship to students, he monitors the process of selection.	Once renounced, there are no concerns of the outcome. When an emperor gives up his throne, he does not worry about what happens in his kingdom any more.



In the four categories of Daan, wealth is not mentioned. This is not to say that donation of wealth is not true Daan. It just is not the beginning or the end of Daan. It is unfortunate that in this age Daan is considered domain of those who have plenty and it is measured in amount of donation. Often Daan is a temptation for earning good name and recipients have temptation to receive even more. But we don't consider a Pandit distributing knowledge or a healer providing relief as a Daan. In all instances, one must remember fundamental tenants of religious teachings.

Still, we value Tyaagis – our monks - more than our donors who give millions. This is as it should be. Our sadhu and sadhvis are the living breathing example of Tyaag. After all, Moksh marg is open only to them. We, the house holders aspiring for Nirvana will have to become a Tyaagi sooner or later.

Thanksgiving Day Jaap A Tradition Followed by Jains in North America

By Sunny P. Jain



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In North America, Jaap programs are held on Thanksgiving Day to pray for the millions of animals that suffer and lose their life during this time of the year. Around this time of the year, it's common to hear the word "Jaap" being used, perhaps in your mandir, among your family and friends, or from a Facebook event invite.

But you may be wondering, what is Jaap and why does it matter?

Collective Prayer

Japa (commonly referred to as Jaap) is a Sanskrit word meaning "chant" or "incantation", and the practice is found in Eastern religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Jaaps are done individually as well as in group settings. When done individually, the goal of the aspirant is to purification of his/her soul, whereas when conducted in a group, through collective prayer, we build a positive energy and spiritual connection with each other and the world around us. Jaaps are characterized by the repetition of mantras (Vedic hymns) and in a group setting, they are often accompanied with classical Indian instruments such as the tabla, dholak, and bells.

Jaaps are performed for many different reasons, but are usually performed for specific causes such as during a sickness or death of a loved one, before an auspicious life event, or during religious observances. Jaap programs differ in duration, from as short as 15 minutes to an entire day, but the intended outcome is the same: a collective spiritual revelation for all participants.

Thanksgiving Day Jaap

Every year, over 300 million turkeys are slaughtered in the United States (about 1/5th of this during Thanksgiving alone). Turkeys are traditionally eaten as the main course of Thanksgiving and Christmas; according to the National Turkey Federation, almost 9 out of 10 Americans eat a turkey at Thanksgiving.

The process in which turkeys are bred and slaughtered is horrific and raises many welfare concerns. To optimize production, welfare is compromised and atrocities are committed to these animals, including but not limited to the separation of turkeys from their mothers at birth, containment in congested, dark lit rooms, injection of hormones making their bodies abnormally large, and a slaughter process which includes debeaking, defeathering, and stunning in electrified water.

As shocking and upsetting as this imagery can be, it's important for everyone to be aware and cognizant of the many atrocities committed around us that we often overlook. Only with this awareness can one truly understand why we are praying for these animals' souls.

What to Think About During a Thanksgiving Day Jaap

There are two things we should think about during a Jaap for Thanksgiving: praying for suffering animal souls and praying for our own spiritual progress.

We pray for the animal lives that are suffering and lost during this time of the year. We pray that they may reincarnate into a better life, where they do not have to go through this suffering and pain again. We pray that more people adopt a vegetarian and vegan lifestyle, reducing this suffering.

We also pray for our spirituality. As individuals striving to be more in tune with our spirituality, it is up to every person to define the spiritual progress of their soul. We pray that we can become better followers of our religion; for instance, when we are faced with an obstacle, we choose the non-violent, holy path; if given the opportunity to spread love and compassion to others, we take it.

This powerful spiritual experience can be complemented with meditation. In Jainism, meditation aims to purify one's emotions, allow one to reflect on the soul, and ultimately realize oneself. For beginners, start by concentrating on your breathing, clearing your mind, and focusing on specific spiritual goals such as the triple jewels of Jainism: right faith (Samyak Darshana), right knowledge (Samyak Gyana), and right conduct (Samyak Charitra). You will feel an immediate difference and calmness simply by applying these meditation techniques.

Animal Rights Activism

Prayer and animal rights activism are not mutually exclusive, and Jaap programs are often coupled with animal welfare fundraisers, volunteering, vegan lunches, and Jain group discussions. There are many ways Jains can use the Jaap as an opportunity to help make a difference: adopting veganism or a more vegan lifestyle (cut down on dairy and other animal products), spreading awareness, donating money, and volunteering at animal shelters and sanctuaries.

Although prayer may seem like a more passive effort in bettering the world, it is important not to disregard the power of prayer in changing and inspiring minds. The impact of many on this world is greater than anything any one person can do alone; if a few people decide to stop or reduce their consumption of dairy products as a result of the Jaap program, that alone can reduce the suffering of numerous cows over a long period of time.

Community Building

Jaap programs present an opportunity to build a foundation for our youth. Moreover, it's a reminder that even though we are from different ages and backgrounds, we are all part of the same community and have one thing in common: we all want the best for our community and religion. They are a reminder that we should all support each other, regardless of caste and denomination, so that one day the next generation will stand side by side with their peers and become agents of change in their own worlds.



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ISLAM



In Islam, true contentment is achieved through establishing a relationship with Allah and always keeping Him in mind. The more people gain the trivial goods of this life, the greater becomes the hunger and the consequent burning of their hearts. Moreover, there is no end for worldly desires and greed. But as for those who seek God, the more they turn to Him, the greater their peace of mind is. This means that a search for the divine or a supreme Deity is inherent within human nature and the innermost yearning of a human being. As we all pass through life looking at people and materialistic things around us, we often tend to look at people above us and desire to be like them. But Islam advises us to look at those below us and practice contentment at what Allah has provided us.

According to Scott Kugle, Associate Professor of South Asian and Islamic Studies. "The Quran is very clear that happiness in this world in this moment is really not the object of life. Rather you should be living not for your own contentment and satisfaction but for God's contentment and satisfaction with you," he says.

Contentment is the neuro-physiological experience of satisfaction and being at ease in one's situation. It is said that a man complained about his old shoes until he saw a man who had no feet. "Wealth is not the abundance of [material] possessions; wealth is self-contentment." (Bukhari & Muslim).

Ego and its impulses are the major obstacles to achieving this state of contentment, Kugle explains. "If we can...withdraw our cravings and desires from short-term goals of happiness and contentment in this world and focus our energies on a higher quest that is for wellbeing that will lead to salvation of the soul in the next world, then that is the ultimate happiness." If we can agree that contentment is real wealth, then discontentment must be real poverty. Discontentment can make a person lose their sense of worth and sense of efficacy.

Source: Wikipedia and <http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/contentment.asp>

Be Research Oriented

Written by Shrimad Jainacharya Shri Ramlalji Maharaj Saheb

Translated by Mr. J.P. Varma and Dr. Bindiya Tater

(Acharya Shri Ramlalji Maharaj Saheb is the head of the Sadhumargi Jain Sangh of Sthanakwasi-Shwetamber Jain sect in India. He took over from late Acharya Shri Nanalalji Maharaj Saheb. At present a total of 50 Sadhus and 321 Sadhis are in the Sadhumargi Sangh. The following is an excerpt from the diary entry of Acharyashri written on July 1, 2015. The pictures have been added by the Jain Digest Editorial Team.)

Most people are followers, treading the beaten path. Those who would chart a new course are rare indeed. It is easy to go down a pathway, but difficult to create one. The latter entails hard work. Many difficulties and obstacles are to be encountered---only thereafter does the road get laid.

When building a road, profound research is expected along with deep thinking. One might draw up a plan, but then, research is not everyone's cup of tea. This is the very reason why one just starts trekking the path that lies ahead. In the practical world, a person would not tread every path he comes across; rather, he would travel down the road that leads him to his destination.



In the world of religion, a person chooses any path. In religion, there is only one destination and one way to get there; however, in the practical world, religion has been given varied forms. The method of worship accepted by a person is viewed by him as religion. Truly speaking, the methods of worship are related to the body. Religion is 'atmasamadhi', or absorption in self. Religion is 'akashay bhav', or the attitude of turning away from passion. Religion is 'veetragata', or being free of attachments and aversions. Methods of

worship are beneficial only if we have a sense of achieving the aforesaid three.

Now, as stated above, most people are followers and, as such, are prone to accept the method of worship they come across. Generally, it is the one they are born with. A person follows the religious values of the family and community he is born into. He does not have any inclination towards getting in touch with his inner-self. Even if such inclination exists, it is not as strong. In such circumstances, people have gravitated towards the environment and values they grew up with.



Some practice religion with kettledrums and timbales, some have reduced religion to incense, lamp and joss sticks. It is not just the Indians but foreigners too who will be inclined to praise their religion when asked about it. One might scrub the body and make it glow, but the religion equated with the self and free of passions a rare sight indeed.

Hence, rising above the propensity to follow the beaten path of religion, be someone that scrutinizes and does his own research (before deciding on which path to follow).

Aisha and Her Indomitable Will

By Khaled Hosseini



*Khaled Hosseini is one of the most recognized and bestselling authors in the world. His books, *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*, have been published in over seventy countries and sold more than 40 million copies worldwide. Since 2006 Khaled has worked with the UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, and is currently a Goodwill Ambassador. Inspired by a trip he made to Afghanistan with the UNHCR, he later established The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, which provides humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. He lives in Northern California with his wife and two children.*

On September 2nd 2015, a three-year-old Syrian boy named Alan Kurdi drowned in the Mediterranean Sea after an inflatable boat overloaded with refugees capsized. September 2017 marked the second anniversary of his tiny body washing up on a Turkish beach, face down in the sand, a grim reminder that more than 2,500 refugees died in 2016 alone attempting the perilous crossing. So far in 2017, over 1,000 people have died in the Mediterranean, fleeing poverty, violence, and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan, and other countries.

If he were still with us, I wonder what Mahatma Gandhi would have to say about this recurring cycle of tragedy. How would he describe our responsibilities, as individuals, cities, nations, with regard to the more than 65 million people who have been displaced and lost all they had?

I met the answer in the flesh this past April, in the form of a young woman named Aisha, a single mother of two who had escaped the atrocities of the civil war in her native South Sudan in the summer of 2016. I met her in Bidi Bidi, a sprawling refugee settlement in the open bush of northern Uganda and home to more than 270,000 refugees like Aisha. She arrived there after villages in her area were attacked, resulting in hellish scenes of rape, indiscriminate shootings, and bodies lying in pools of blood in the streets. In Bidi Bidi, Aisha lives in a small shelter - mud brick walls and thatched roof - with her two boys. She owns next to nothing, her existence stringent, a never-ending toil. Still, Aisha, who is slim, kind-eyed and soft-spoken, told me that she agreed to become a foster parent to a severely disabled small child. The little

girl had no name and was either two or three.

She had been abandoned by her own mother, was paralyzed on the right side of the body and doubly incontinent. When Aisha first met her, she was told the child could not feed herself, sit up, or even speak. She needed uninterrupted care and attention.

'Strength comes not from physical capacity but from an indomitable will.'
-Mahatma Gandhi

"I love her as my own now," Aisha said to me, holding the child on her lap as we sat in a small hut. "It is not easy for someone to accept her. But I cannot give up. Someone had to give her a home, give her somewhere safe to live."

I remember my humbling encounter with this remarkable act of selflessness, extraordinary in any circumstance, let alone Aisha's. It reminds me of Mahatma Gandhi saying that strength comes not from physical capacity but 'from an indomitable will.' I think often of Aisha, and her indomitable will, and I marvel at how much I stand to learn from her today, with the world in turmoil and war waged at the expense of the powerless millions. We all stand to learn from Aisha, especially in this global climate of growing hostility toward those deemed 'other'. Aisha demonstrated to me that we are all better off when we pass on to our children a world that operates on the principles of solidarity with the defenseless and respect for human dignity. We all stand to be inspired by her, I think, as individuals, as communities, and indeed as nations.

Aisha told me she considered three names for her new child: Glory, Mercy, and Grace. She decided on Mercy. I think Mahatma Gandhi would have approved of the simple and poignant poetry of her choice.



Shrimad Rajchandra Mission
Dharampur



Yugpurush Saardh Shatabdi Mahotsav

A euphoric 4-day celebration to mark the 150th Birth Anniversary Year of spiritual luminary Shrimad Rajchandraji

The year 2017 marks the 150th Birth Anniversary Year of Shrimad Rajchandraji (1867-1901) – a profound spiritual luminary, poet-philosopher and the spiritual guide to Mahatma Gandhi. Earlier this year, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a glorious tribute to the Mahatma's Mahatma - Shrimad Rajchandraji, by launching two commemorative coins and stamp bearing the His portrait. Myriad organisations and spiritual seekers worldwide are celebrating this monumental occasion.

Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur (SRMD) hosted a 4-day festival that jubilantly venerated the revered saint Shrimad Rajchandraji through a multitude of festivities. The occasion saw the august presence of numerous saints, dignitaries and scores of spiritual seekers from around the world from 2nd Nov to 5th Nov '17. The thousands of spiritual aspirants had converged at Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram Dharampur – a pious site blessed by Shrimad Rajchandraji's presence for approximately 35 days during His life's final year. The Yugpurush Saardh Shatabdi Mahotsav was graced by the presence of saints including Puja Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai –founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur, Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji, Pujayashri Morari Babu, Pujayashri Viveksagar Swami, Puja Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, Puja Acharyashri Lokesh Muniji, Venerable Bhikkhu Sanghasenaji, Puja Brahmakumari Didi Dr. Nirmala.

The celebrations witnessed the unveiling of the world's tallest statue of Shrimad Rajchandraji, a Mahamastakabhishek ceremony of the statue, a majestic shobhayatra-parade in Dharampur town, an enthralling devotional evening with renowned singers and the inception of the new 200-bed Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital. A special segment was devoted to celebrate the phenomenal milestones reached by 'Yugpurush - Mahatma ke Mahatma' a play portraying the deep bond between Gandhiji and his spiritual mentor Shrimadji.

Day 1 – November 2, 2017



A majestic Shobhayatra (procession) of 7000 people marked the start of the celebrations on the morning of 2nd November – making this one of the largest shobhayatra's to take place. The procession began with the freeing of 150 caged birds marking the 150th Birth Anniversary Year of Shrimadji. Auspiciously decorated vehicles carried Puja Gurudevshri and images of Lord Mahavira, Shrimad Rajchandraji, the 4 highly revered devotees of Shrimadji; while elephants, camels and horses added to the proceeding. Five stations along the route depicted incidents from Shrimadji's life and had engaged the townspeople with activities and games on the evenings of 30th Oct to 1st Nov. Selected women-folk in the procession carried 'Shrimad Rajchandra Vachanamrut' a book-compilation of Shrimadji's letters and works, and the

women of Dharampur made 'ghauli' artwork from dry rice, while blazing drums, a band and chants with Shrimad Rajchandraji's pious name added to the elation.



The evening of this day witnessed the unveiling of the world's tallest statue of Shrimad Rajchandraji at the hands of Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai and Sri Sri Ravishankarji. The statue in 'padmasan mudra' is 34-feet tall symbolizing the 34 uplifting years of Shrimadji's life, surrounded by a water body in an open air amphitheatre. Seekers then enjoyed an elevating evening of devotional music with the popular composer duo Sachin-Jigar and artist Bhoomi Trivedi. A special performance that mesmerized the crowd was the unique yoga dance composed of movements of yoga postures synchronized with music, along with an 'ocean dance' that created a unique visual display.

Day 2 - November 3, 2017

On 3rd Nov there was a mahapujan of Shrimad Rajchandra Vachanamrut – a book-compilation of Shrimadji's letters and works, while the evening witnessed a grand celebration to celebrate the milestones reached by the play 'Yugpurush – Mahatma ke Mahatma'. Produced by SRMD, 'Yugpurush' surpassed all milestones of success reaching 1000 shows in over 290 cities worldwide, reaching over 6,40,000 viewers within one year. The Gujarati play is directed by acclaimed director Rajesh Joshi of 'Code Mantra' fame, scripted by well-known playwright Uttam Gada of 'Maharathi' fame and the music direction is by popular composer duo Sachin-Jigar. In order to cater to the huge demand for the play, eight teams are now performing 'Yugpurush' simultaneously in various cities globally. The play is currently running in Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Bengali, Tamil & English.

Day 3 - November 4, 2017

The first Mahamastak Abhishek of the 34-foot statue of Shrimadji took place on the morning of 4th Nov, where Pujya Gurudevshri along with saints and devotees who showered five types of specially prepared holy water on the statue. The awe-inspiring sight enthralled the eager devotees.



Mahamastak Abhishek



Saints and Government Officials gathered for Khaat Muhurt Ceremony of the Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital



Next, was the ground inception of the soon-to-be Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital in the presence of Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai and renowned spiritual leader Pujyashri Morari Bapu. The site will soon see a new 200-bed multi-specialty charity hospital with state-of-the-art facilities for the economically underprivileged in this belt of Southern Gujarat.

In the evening, Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai was bestowed with the prestigious Mahatma Gandhi Seva Medal, by Padma Shri S.P. Varmaji on behalf of Gandhi Global Family, a United Nations DPI accredited Peace NGO.

Day 4 - November 5, 2017

The final day of the Yugpurush Mahotsav (5th Nov) witnessed the uplifting Atmarpit diksha ceremony, wherein 5 young devotees (two males and three females) were initiated into Atmarpit diksha. The 'Atmarpit' group is a group of life-long celibate devotees who have chosen to lead a life of sadhana (spiritual pursuit) and seva (selfless service). Under the direction of Pujya Gurudevshri, they are progressing on the path of spirituality. Several highly qualified individuals have chosen to be atmarpits, including doctors, dentists, engineers and the like; and to use their lives towards a higher purpose.

All four days of the Mahotsav witnessed enthralling and power packed 'satsangs' (discourses) by the highly revered spiritual leader Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai that elicited reverberating applause from the inspired audience. Thus the Yugpurush Mahotsav was a phenomenal and befitting culmination of Shrimad Rajchandraji's 150th Birth Anniversary Year.

Other initiatives by Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur for Shrimadji's 150th Birth Anniversary Year include:

- Shrimad Rajchandra Educational Aids Distribution – an initiative that distributes notebooks and stationery items at highly subsidized rates to over 1.2 lakh rural families in Gujarat.
- Naming of roads and chowks in the memory of Shrimad Rajchandraji
- An engaging and interactive travelling exhibition showcasing Shrimad Rajchandraji's virtuous life, literary compositions, and teachings.

More information: www.shrimadrajchandramission.org

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Celebrating 150 birth anniversary of Shrimad Rajchandraji
A Unique dance drama staged at the Yugpurush Saardh Shatabdi Mahotsav

Every culture has some kind of religion, and all faiths answer the question “What is the meaning of life?” Humanity’s search for an answer to this question is one of the main reasons that people are drawn to religion. The answers, although different from religion to religion, give people’s lives purpose, meaning, and hope.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Story of Ilächikumär (from JAINA Education Story Book)

In ancient times, there lived a wealthy businessman named Dhandatta in the town of Ilävardhan. His wife, Ilächi, gave birth to a lovable son. As he was the only son, the parents deliberately kept him nameless as per the custom of the times. Eventually, as the son of Ilächi, he came to be known as Ilächiputra and then Ilächikumär. He was raised with care and attention and never lacked any luxuries, growing up to be a handsome youth. Soon, his parents felt it was time to find a wife for him. Luckily, they did not need to look very far as they were a prosperous family and Ilächikumär was their only son. Many families wanted their daughters to marry him. His parents prepared a list of selected names and asked Ilächikumär to choose the one that he liked the most. However, Ilächikumär could not make a selection.



One day, a party of acrobats came to Ilävardhan. In those days there were no stadiums where acrobats could perform, so they performed their routines for their audience on the open streets. Beating drums to announce their arrival, the acrobats planted poles in an open square off the main street and connected them with ropes while a large crowd gathered. They then began their routine, climbing the poles one after another and demonstrating their skills, walking and jumping over the high rope with ease above the fascinated audience. Attracted by the commotion, Ilächikumär also went to watch the show. While enjoying the performance, his attention was drawn to the chief acrobat's beautiful young daughter who was dancing gracefully to the drums with bells on her feet. Ilächikumär was so mesmerized by her beauty and charm that he could not take his eyes off her.

At the end of the show, the acrobats descended the rope and started collecting money from the audience. People were very pleased with the performance and paid handsomely. After collecting a large amount of money, the acrobats left the square to camp for the night and everyone else went

home. Though Ilächikumär also returned home, his mind was still on the beautiful girl he had seen that day. At dinner, his parents found him silent and unresponsive; they had never seen him so dazed. His father questioned his absent-mindedness, but he did not answer. When his mother persistently asked for the reason for his silence, he finally replied that his heart was attracted to the acrobat girl and he wanted to marry her.

His mother was taken aback to hear that. She said that she could find him a very beautiful and lovable girl from a high caste and respectable family and asked him to forget the lower caste acrobat girl, but Ilächikumär replied that he had never met any other girl who attracted him and he wanted to marry her. Acknowledging his resolve on the matter, she told her husband about their son's intentions.

Dhandatta was shocked to hear this. He tried to dissuade his son from his intentions but Ilächikumär remained firm. Since Dhandatta was a sensible man, he could see that Ilächikumär would not be at peace without that girl. He did not want to lose his son for the sake of prestige. Therefore, he called the chief of acrobats and requested him to give his daughter in marriage to Ilächikumär.

However, the acrobat refused, saying that he was bound by a condition of his tribe. Dhandatta thought that he might be looking for money for the girl and offered to give as much wealth as the acrobat wanted in return for agreeing to marry his daughter to Ilächikumär. The acrobat however declined the offer and again replied that he could not break the condition, so Dhandatta then asked him what this condition was. The acrobat said that he could give his daughter only to a person who could win an award from a royal court by pleasing the King with his acrobatic skill and then use the prize money to provide dinner to his community.

Dhandatta was disappointed to hear a condition that was apparently impossible for his son to fulfill. After he explained to his wife what had happened, she told her son and said that the girl would only marry an expert acrobat and asked him to forget her.

Ilächikumär was silent but his mind was racing with thoughts. He felt that he would not be able to live happily without the girl and was willing to make any sacrifice for her. He decided that he was even prepared to learn acrobatic skills for that purpose. His parents misunderstood

his silence as disappointment and thought that in time he would recover. For a time, they tried to divert his attention to other matters to help him forget and Ilächikumär allowed them to believe that they were succeeding, but his mind was made up. When the acrobat group decided to leave the town of Ilävardhan, Ilächikumär secretly left his home and joined the them.

He discarded his fancy clothes for the acrobats' uniform and began learning their skills. Since he was smart and diligently worked to learn acrobatics, the chief's daughter soon fell in love with him and helped him learn. With her help, he easily mastered the art and soon became an expert acrobat. When the group reached the city of Benätat, he requested the chief to organize a show at the royal court so that he could have a chance to fulfill the condition. The chief went to the young King and requested that he watch the performance of the young acrobat and to award him a suitable prize for his skills.

When the King agreed, the acrobats erected the poles in the compound of the royal palace and invited the officers of the state and the elite of the city to watch. Just before the show was due to start, the King arrived and took his seat in the balcony of the palace. Bowing to him, Ilächikumär went over to the pole, jumped up and began displaying his acrobatic skills.



Ilächikumär walked on the rope with ease and grace, performing risky jumps and somersaults. It was a superb performance and full of acrobatic feats no one had ever seen before. Everyone was highly impressed with his skill. Ilächikumär felt gratified by the appreciation of the people, thinking that it was enough to please the King as well. He came down and bowed to the King again and the chief went to him to request an appropriate award.

However, during the performance the King's attention

had been diverted by the beautiful girl and he had been fascinated by her. Seeing how lovingly she gazed at Ilächikumär throughout the performance, he thought that he could easily gain her if he somehow got rid of Ilächikumär. Therefore, when the chief acrobat approached the King and asked if he had enjoyed the performance, the King pretended that his mind had been occupied with problems of the state. He said that he had not been able to give his full attention to the performance. He requested Ilächikumär to demonstrate his skills again. Accordingly, Ilächikumär got on the rope again and displayed his skills, again doing a superb job. But at the end of this second show, the King pretended to be drowsy and asked him to repeat the performance again. Ilächikumär could not believe the situation. He suspected that there was something wrong. However, since he was still eager to accomplish his cherished goal of marrying the girl, he decided to try again.

Once again, he began the ropewalk, triumphantly noting the audience's reaction. While looking around, he noticed a beautiful woman offering sweet food to a young monk. She was in the prime of her youth and was very attractive and highly graceful. However, what surprised Ilächikumär was that the monk was clearly unaffected by her beauty. He compared this to his own situation. Ilächikumär had changed his entire life for the beauty of one girl, yet the monk was impervious to the lovely woman in front of him. He was amazed by the monk's self-control and detachment towards the beautiful woman. What power kept the monk aloof in her presence? In addition, while not only remaining aloof, the monk's face radiated peace!

This attitude of the monk raised a succession of thoughts in the mind of Ilächikumär. "Why do I not feel detachment in the presence of a beautiful young girl?" He also continued to wonder why the King had asked him to repeat his performances, and finally he suspected that the King must be attracted to the girl and must be waiting for him to fall from the rope. "If I fall from the rope, I would be badly hurt and would not be able to perform acrobatic feats. In that case, I will never be able to marry the girl for whom I have abandoned my home and my parents."

Ilächikumär now realized that the happiness he was looking for was merely an illusion. He began to recall his early religious training, when he had been exposed to religious principles and had learned about the soul within the body and its immense capabilities. He realized that his achievements as an acrobat must have been due to that inner capability. Similarly, the monk could remain unaffected because he remained tuned to his soul and its abilities, remaining vigilant about potential pitfalls. "As an acrobat, I have to remain constantly vigilant because the slightest unawareness on my part could result in a fall from the high rope and possibly die. Why, then, should I not use the same vigilance for the sake of spiritual upliftment?"

In an earlier life, he had trodden a long path of spiritual pursuit. The impact of that achievement was lying subdued within him, waiting for an opportunity to manifest itself. Now, the sight of the monk provided the needed catalyst, and he became fully awakened to the realization that he was a soul and that all the other situations were simply an illusion. While on the rope, Ilächikumär dwelt deep into his self and attained omniscience, or keval-jnän. Then, he quietly climbed down the pole and bid farewell to every one as he left the place

Moral:

The focus of this story is on the principle of detachment. The monk's detachment towards the beautiful woman guided Ilächikumär onto the right path. Attachment to materialistic things, people, or feelings often causes misery to others and to us. We should strive to minimize our attachment to the outer world (i.e. detach ourselves) and focus on our inner self. Attachment is an obstacle in the path of self-realization.

Book Review: *Atmasadhana Amrut Anusthan*

by Dilip V. Shah

Author Dr. Pravinchandra L. Shah

In Gujarati-335 Pages, \$5.00 - Hard Cover - Published by The Jain Center of Connecticut
Officially unveiled at the 2017 JAINA Convention)

This book by Pravinbhai of Pennsylvania, is a result of years of self-study and guidance from Pandit Shri Dhirajbhai Mehta and Late Shri Kiranbhai Parikh. Pravinbhai is a frequent contributor to JAINA DIGEST and has lectured at various Jain centers during Paryushan. The author has undertaken to explain “True understanding of Authentic Self”. Pravinbhai’s writing is passionate and he is able to sight authority of his reverend heroes – Anandghanji, Yashovijayji, Mohanvijayji Devchandrajai and Shrimad Rajchandra for every assertion made in the book. Reading the book is indeed a heavy lifting and reading it over and over again is the key to unearth numerous hidden gems. He brings us this splendid study of Mokshmarg (Nirvana) through the lenses of Bhaktiyog and Gnanyog. In many instances, he quotes from Uttaradhyan Sutra also.

The book has twelve chapters. It starts in a classical manner – Manglacharan. In the next chapter, he describes the rarity and good fortune of having been born as a human being that provides scarce opportunity to embark on a path to Nirvana. In subsequent chapters, he charts step by step guide of the journey towards spiritual perfection. For example, in chapter 3, he identifies four essential attributes of a seeker - leaving behind personal opinions in daily study of writings such as Gnansar, Adhytamasar etc, importance of knowing a knowledgeable person (Sadguru), keeping company of other sadhaks (fellow travelers) and instilling those teachings in daily life in accordance with Jinvani. In chapter four, he describes five manners in which one can walk the path of true Dharma.

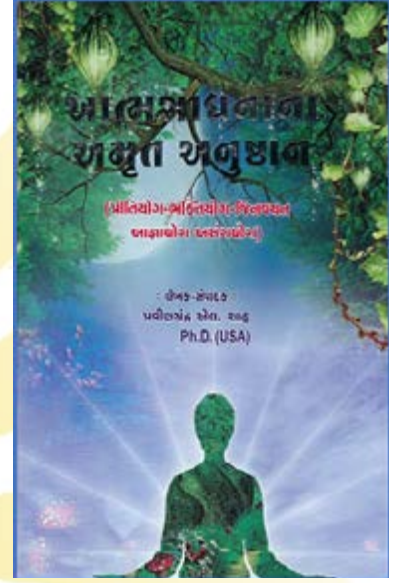
In chapter five the author describes various paths (Bhaktiyog, Gnanyog, Dravyanuyog etc.) to self-attainment some harder than the other. He states that Bhaktiyog – unconditional love for the divine without any expectations and one that completely destroys ego is an easier and best path to Nirvana. Bhaktiyog became more prevalent about 400 years ago through the writings (24 Stavans) of Shri Anandghanji, Shri Yashovijayji, Shri Devchandrajai, Shri Mohanvijayji and Shrimad Rajchandrajai. There is a separate chapter containing biographies of these illustrious writers expounding on Bhaktiyog. In support of importance of Bhaktiyog, he also takes note of Hindu poets like Narsinh Mehta, Gangasati and Meera.

Chapters 7 thru 10 are the crown jewels of this book. Chapter 7 explains Pritiyog – divine love to Lord Tirthankara and sadguru by explaining epic compositions of the four Mahatmas, chapter 8 beautifully explains Bhaktiyog which is total surrender to the Lord, chapter 9 narrates uniqueness and importance of understanding Jinvani and Jin-Agna to live in obedience to the Lord, and chapter 10 provides comprehensive treatment of Asangyog or the process of self realization integrating Bhaktiyog and Gnanyog with numerous references of revered Jain texts.

There is a short chapter on Jain theory of Karma towards the end. At the end of each chapter he gives a short summary of what was covered and a brief 7 page dictionary of words used in the book that is very useful.

The author acknowledges the encouragement and financial support from the Norwalk, CT Jain center where he has given numerous swadhyaya lectures during his multiple Parushan visits. The book carries words of praise from Pandit Shri Dhirajlal Mehta, Pramdaben Chitrabhanu and Shrimad Rajchandra Adhyatmik Sadhna Kendra (Koba). What is fascinating is that a trained scientist with a doctorate in Newtonian and Quantum physics has such a deep passion for spiritual pursuit. May be Science and Religion are just the two sides of the same coin – Truth!

The book is available from the author by writing to him at pshahusa@yahoo.com, Jain Center of Connecticut and at Siddhachalam. It is heartwarming to see emergence of Jain scholarship from householders in the USA. Pravinbhai of Pennsylvania deserves a lot of praise for venturing into such complex subject and presenting in simple Gujarati. It is worth noting that another such scholar amongst us - Shri Chandrakant Mehta of NJ (Inspired by Pandit Shree Dhirajlal Mehta) has just published a 2-volume set on Tatvarth Sutra in Gujarati. These citizen scholars present their knowledge to American Jains selflessly and ceaselessly without any financial gains. It behooves us to support their efforts and profit from their wisdom.



Update on the Jain Academic Education in North America

By Dr. Sulekh C. Jain



Dr. Sulekh C. Jain is the Past Secretary and President of JAINA, founder and co-founder of several Jain institutions, Centers and programs, recipient of JAINA RATTAN, promoter of programs in Jain Academic Education in Universities, Chairman of Governing Council of International School for Jain Studies in USA, and author of many Jain and technical books, papers and nine US technical patents. He and his wife live in Houston, Texas. Email: scjain@earthlink.net

(Editor's Note: In April 2016 issue of Jain Digest, Dr. Sulekh C. Jain and Dilip V Shah, provided us with detailed information about the history and current status of the Jain Academic Education in North America. A lot of progress has been made since then. Here is an update as of December 2017. Jain Digest congratulates the JAINA Academic Liaison Committee and all others who worked hard towards these remarkable achievements.)

Christmas came 4 days early on December 21st, 2017, with a donation of \$800,000 by a few philanthropist Jains in Los Angeles and from Jain Center of Southern California in Los Angeles. This enabled us to establish the "Bhagwan Mallinath Endowed Professorship in Jain Studies" at Loyola Marymount University (a very elite university) in Los Angeles, California.

Prior to this, during 2017, 2 Chairs in Jain Studies were established in California.



1) "Mohini Jain Presidential Chair in Jain Studies" with a donation of \$1.5 million was established at the University of California at Davis.

2) During 2017, 150th birth anniversary of Shrimad Rajchandraji was celebrated all over the world. The generous one million dollar donation by philanthropist Jains in Los Angeles made it possible to pay a special tribute to Shrimadji by establishing a "Shrimad Rajchandra Chair in Jain Studies" at the University of California at Riverside. The university's College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, as well as the Department of Religious Studies Feb. 17 signed papers for the establishment of the Chair.

From left Dean Milagros Pena/ Meeraben Modi/ Jasantbhai Modi /Vice Chancellor Hien Nguyen/Mahesh Wadher/Usha Wadher/Chancellor Kim A. Wilcox

In 2015/2016 also, we had seen several Universities making a commitment to provide Jain education:

- 1) "Bhagwan Parshvanath Presidential Chair in Jain Studies" was established at the University of California at Irvine with a total funding of two million dollars.
- 2) Jain Studies classes began at San Diego State University in San Diego, California
- 3) University of North Texas, Dallas, Bhagwan Adinath Professorship with a donation of \$500,000.
- 4) Rice University Houston, Texas. Bhagwan Mahavir Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Jain Studies with a yearly \$40,000.

AN APPEAL TO THE JAIN COMMUNITY

Apoorva Avasar - Let us build Gyan Mandirs in the names of all 24 Tirthankars in North America

Recently, Samani Chaitanya Pragya Ji from Ladnun, Rajasthan, wrote about the progress we have made with Jain academic studies in North America. She said: *"I congratulate for all these long-term results and hope that it will continue till we establish all the 24 chairs or professorships in the name of all the 24 Tirthankars"*.

We appeal to the Jain community to take inspiration from this and build/establish more Gyan Mandirs.

As of December 2017, the Jain community has built/established 4 such Gyan Mandirs in the names of our Tirthankars. These are:

- 1) Bhagwan Adinath endowed Professorship in Jain Studies at University of North Texas in Denton Dallas, Texas.
- 2) Bhagwan Mallinath endowed Professorship in Jain Studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California.
- 3) Bhagwan Parshavanath Presidential Chair in Jain Studies at University of California Irvine in Los Angeles, California.
- 4) Bhagwan Mahavir endowed Professorship at Florida International University in Miami, Florida

The Jain community in North America should now work to establish such Gyan Mandirs in the names of remaining 20 Tirthankars and should not rest till we have Chairs or Professorships in the name of all Tirthankars.

This will be a significant and historic accomplishment and will change the face of Jainism. We Jains are educated, dynamic, visionary and affluent. Hope several donors will come forward to make this happen soon.

The amount of funds needed depends upon several factors such as status and ranking of the university, whether it is a state or a private university, etc.

JAINA's Academic Liaison Committee (ALC) has the knowhow and is ready to assist. Please feel free to call at 832-594-8005 for details.

"The best way to show my gratitude is to accept everything, even my problems, with joy" - Mother Teresa

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