

# Jain Digest

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ॐ हो श्री महावीर स्वामी, सर्वज्ञाय नमः  
ऋ जुबालिका नदी किनारे धरते शुक्लध्यान  
गोदुग्घासन में प्रभु, प्राप केवलज्ञान



Bhagwan Mahavir Kevalgyan Kalyanak Bhumi, Jrambhika, India

## JAIN DIGEST

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### **On the Cover:**

#### **Bhagwan Mahavir Kevalgyan Kalyanak Bhumi**

Picture of the murti of Bhagwan Mahavir in a cow-milking posture. He achieved Kevalgyan while meditating in this posture on the banks of Rijuvalika river in the village of Jrambhika in Jharkhand, India.

#### **Correction to article published in February 2021**

*Mrs. Mohini Jain's contribution to the Presidential Chair established at the University of California, Davis, in 2016 was \$1.5 Million. It was incorrectly reported as \$1 million. We apologize for this error.*

### **Disclosure**

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



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## Editor's Note

Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

At the beginning of this year, just as we thought that the pandemic was getting under control in most parts of the world, many of us are heart-broken to see the devastation created by the second wave of the virus in India and other countries in southeast Asia. We hope that this crisis ends soon. Many governments, organizations and individuals are providing whatever assistance they can, so that the horrendous suffering ends and life returns to normal. We, at JAINA, have provided help in various ways and continue to pray for our fellow human beings.

In this June issue of Jain Digest, we are honored to bring you articles by two prominent members of Jain community in UK – Professor Atul K. Shah and Satish Kumar. Professor Shah is a founding editor of the renowned *Jain Spirit* magazine. In the article titled "Culture Never Forgets – It adapts", he shares a new project on "Protecting Jain Migration Memories", which was launched during the Pandemic. Satish Kumar is an Indian British activist and a distinguished speaker. In his article on Faith and Science, he brings a new Jain perspective and emphasizes that religious faiths need to embrace science, especially climate science.

In this issue, you will find that for the first time, we have included two poems in Hindi! In "Mahavir Teri Ek Jhalak", Savita Jain expresses her devotion and gratitude towards Bhagwan Mahavir and in "Bas Ek Parda", Himanshu Gandhi urges us to remove the veil and focus on the reality of our existence. We thank them for their contribution of these wonderful compositions.

During March and April, we had asked our community members to share their experiences in "Practicing Jain Principles". From the several entries we had received from North America and India, our editorial team has selected a few that you will find interesting and educational. We believe that knowing how other people are applying the principles helps us to get a better understanding of the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir and helps us make our faith stronger. We thank all those who filled out the form.

With the same goal of making our faith stronger, in the article about Mahasati Chandanbala, Rajkumar Jain and Anop Vora from our editorial team, bring you eight unique lessons you can learn from her life. I am

sure after reading this article, you will have even a greater reverence for the Mahasatiji.

After doing an in-depth research, Dr. Parveen Jain has written an article describing Bhagwan Mahavir's journey to Kevalgyan. Due to space limitation, we bring you portion of that article with focus on the description of the auspicious event of achievement of Kevalgyan at the pious Kevalgyan Kalyanak Bhumi in India.

In the *Transformation* section, Ramesh Khandhar tells us about signs and systems to look for in assessing our spiritual progress. The second article in this section, taken from UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center, shows the transformative power of Yoga on our body and brain.

In the article "*From Earthlings to Ahimsa*", writer Kenneth Furr tells us about his journey in search of Ahimsa and how grateful he is to find it in Jainism.

In continuing with the goal of recognizing our young generation, we bring you two articles previously published by YJA. Shruti Jain explores the parallel between Jain teachings and Jay Shetty's book titled "Think Like a Monk". Nishi Shah/Suryaraj Jain write about a pathshala teacher Monica Shah – a role model for young kids. The third article written by Riya Jain, contains a well-researched, thoughtful explanation of Equanimity.

In addition, we have updates on the activities of Academic Liaison and Ahimsa Meals and Fasting Committees; update on 2021 JAINA Convention and a few other articles such as Tribute to Dr. Surendra Singhvi, recognition of a philanthropic couple Harshad and Raksha Shah, information about the *Compassion in Action* Art contest, etc.

My sincere thanks to our editorial team for their efforts in approaching new authors, searching for new content and working on putting together your responses to "Practicing Jain Principles". Thanks to Jayanaben Shah for designing the beautiful cover page and overall design of the magazine.

Hope you enjoy reading all articles in this issue. Thanks to many of you that continue to provide us with valuable feedback. Please write to us at [jaindigestpublication@gmail.com](mailto:jaindigestpublication@gmail.com) if you would like to join our editorial team or write an article for our next issue which will be published in October 2021.

Stay safe. Stay healthy.

In Seva,  
Dilip Parekh

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## JAINA President's Message

Jai Jinendra!

Hope you and your family are healthy and had wonderful Ayambil Oli and Mahavir Janma Kalyanak celebrations at your Jain Center. It is my privilege to share with you several major accomplishments JAINA has made over the last 4 months. With your support, JAINA continues to make progress even in the challenging times of the Coronavirus Pandemic and achieving its vision to evolve and promote Jain practices, help others, educate Jains and non-Jains to create a strong North American Jain community, create awareness of Jainism by spreading the message of Bhagwan Mahavir and energize our community by evoking social changes.

### 2021 Virtual JAINA Convention



We are ready and excited to host you at the virtual JAINA Convention. Many of our volunteers are working around the clock to make sure you will enjoy the programs and will have a memorable experience. This Convention is special as

we are bringing various interesting and educational events which are open to global Jain community, and not just the North American Jain community. We would be hosting over 6000 Jains around the world and new registrations are coming in everyday! Pandemic is not stopping us. This may turn out to be the convention with the highest attendance ever. See you at the convention from July 1 to 6, 2021. *Please read a separate article about the various events planned at the convention in this magazine.*

### February 2021

Under a new initiative “**Know your JAINA**”, every month, one or two JAINA Committees host a townhall type meetings where the community members meet the Committee Chair and his team to learn about the committee's current and future plans, ask questions, or volunteer to work for the committee. So far, we have hosted 4 committee meetings.

### March 2021

1) JAINA Vaiyavach committee successfully met the initial goal of raising 1 Million dollars for 2020-2021. Since we are seeing continuous outpouring of community support for this noble cause, we have



increased our fundraising goal to \$1.5 million for 2021 to serve our Sadhu & Sadhvi Bhagwants.

Please [donate to Vaiyavach Committee](#).

2) After a successful virtual event in February 2021, Jain Connect launched its website in March.

3) Prof. Eva De Clercq of Ghent University in Belgium with Jain donors, Mr. Surendra Patwari of Antwerp, and Drs. Jasvant and Meera Modi from Los Angeles have agreed to establish the “Acharya Mahapragya Jain Professorship” in Jain Studies at Ghent University, Belgium with a pledge of \$65K per year for 5 years.

### April 2021

1) In response to the second wave of the COVID 19 pandemic, JAINA revived the **Sadharmik Bhakti fund** and with combined efforts along with the World Community Services hosted a fund raiser on May 8, 2021 by inviting Rashtrasant Pujya Namramuniji and Acharya Udayvallabh Surji Maharaj to give an inspiring speech. The event was very successful and JAINA got pledges of 1.1 million Dollars to help our community members that are suffering due to the terrible second wave of Covid in India

2) JAINA **Academic Liaison Committee** facilitated the establishment of *Shri Anantnath Endowed Chair in Jain Studies* at the University of Wisconsin, Madison with a contribution of 1 Million dollars that is matched by a foundation making it to 2 Million dollars.

JAINA ALC also plans to establish *Bhagwan Munisuvrat Swami Endowed Professorship in Jain Studies* at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

*Please read detailed update about ALC activities in a separate article in this magazine.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



3) JAINA has established a "Karuna Ratna" (Compassion Jewel) Award – starting with the 2021 Convention. Jain individuals (or spouse of a Jain) living in North America, who have contributed significantly to compassionate activities for social causes, i.e. 'Jains for Humanity', will be recognized during the 2021 JAINA Virtual Convention.

4) JAINA and the Global Compassion Organization together hosted Diabetes 360 webinar. During this 6-week program, the community learned how to cook healthy meals, gained knowledge about ways to stay healthy with Yoga and other remedies. Experts held question and answer sessions.

5) JAINA India Foundation joined hands with 10 other organizations to celebrate Mahavir Jayanti 2021 through a campaign 'Say No to Plastic Bottles'

6) Jivadaya Committee of JAINA launched a fund-raising drive, in support of a legal action in Wisconsin to stop expansion of a slaughterhouse. JAINA is not a party to the lawsuit but is supporting efforts to stop expansion of the slaughterhouse capacity four-fold.

The committee's goal is to raise \$25,000 in support of the legal fight. Thousands of lives can be saved every month if the expansion is stopped. Please consider donating to Jivadaya Fund.

### May 2021

JAINA created an emergency COVID 19 fund drive by combining efforts of the World Community Service and the Sadharmik Bhakti Committee. JAINA brought Manglik Pravachan for the *Emergency India COVID Relief (Sadharmik Fund & Humanitarian Aids)* to raise funds for humanitarian support and services to our Sadharmik Brothers and Sisters in India.



**Donate Via "Zelle" using**  
**treasurer@jaina.org**

### Upcoming Events

#### JAINA Summer Course

JAINA Summer Course **Earth is Calling** by Dr. Christopher Miller is starting from July 12-30, 2021, Monday to Friday from 9 am - 12 pm (PST). This comprehensive course will help you rediscover and apply your Jain Dharma. To sign up, email Dr. Christopher Miller at [25tattvas@gmail.com](mailto:25tattvas@gmail.com).

#### Major Youth Updates

YJA is excited to announce that they are officially planning for an in-person **2022 YJA Convention in Dallas, Texas**.

I am very grateful for your continued support to JAINA in all endeavors.

With Peace, Love, and Happiness,

**Mahesh Wadher**

# Working Together with Compassion

(Source: From “Write Off” project by students from Valencia High School, Placentia, CA)

*When Government, Social workers and Citizens work together with Compassion, when they think little outside the box - when incantations are filled with Karuna, you can reach higher goals. Here are two success stories: In India, Mumbai’s Dharavi community could fight Covid successfully and in Italy small town named Camini can be reveilized by giving chance to refugees.*

## As COVID-19 ravages India, a slum succeeds in turning the tide

(This article by Roli Srivastava was published by Thomson Reuters Foundation on May 12, 2021)

As Indian cities face record daily deaths, new cases have plunged in the Mumbai slum in recent weeks as officials bolstered anti-virus measures first put in place last year - from mass testing to disinfections in public areas, including bathrooms.

“The toilet is being cleaned every day since the last year as against once a week earlier. There’s soap and sanitiser and a box for disposing sanitary pads that were otherwise strewn around,” Shaikh, 30, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

“People are also more cautious now: they are using masks and sanitisers ... exposure to deaths and infections has made everyone fearful,” said the mother-of-one.

Home to 850,000 people cramped in 55,000 mostly one-room homes, Dharavi’s confirmed coronavirus cases fell to nine on Monday - down from a one-day peak of 99 a month ago, according to local government data.

Residents and local officials say that is largely the result of lessons learned during last year’s first wave of cases, when Dharavi defied expectations by tackling an initial surge in infections.

A testing protocol including free tests for tens of thousands of residents was revived as cases crept into double digits, fever camps were set up to scan for symptoms and quarantine facilities set up last year were reopened.

Despite vaccine shortages, announcements have blared out from loudspeakers across the slum, urging residents to get vaccinated. Another campaign sought to overcome vaccine hesitancy by offering free soap to anyone getting their jab.

“There is a strong community outreach, contact tracing continues and toilets are being deep cleaned with jet sprays,” said Yusuf Kabir, a water, sanitation and health specialist with UNICEF, listing factors that helped the slum turn the tide. Toilet operators and sanitation workers are more vigilant, Kabir said.

Local politician and Dharavi resident Babu Khan spent years challenging Mumbai’s municipal corporation over poor hygiene, overcrowding and rubbish-dumping in the slum that heightened the risk of disease. But the COVID-19 crisis has forced both authorities and local people to rethink sanitation and public health issues.

“The coronavirus has changed a lot: doctors, health posts, ward officers are paying attention. Dharavi has got the attention we had been seeking all these years,” he said.

Local residents are more cautious, too, and the slum’s narrow streets are cleaner.

“After the first COVID-19 death in Dharavi last year, there was panic among people. They became alert and realised they had to save themselves,” Khan said.

Local doctor Sudhir Patil who has been practicing in Dharavi for years said the number of asthmatic bronchitis and tuberculosis cases have dropped over the last year as residents wear masks and take better care of their diets.

Despite a cautious optimism that the worst is over,

officials are already making plans for a possible third wave, including setting up facilities for children, who are not yet eligible for vaccination.

“We can’t assume everything is okay... every wave has its own challenges,” said Dighavkar. “But there is a positive impact of these changes in Dharavi on children who have had an early exposure to good habits. And that will be permanent change.”



## When Italians Abandoned This Village, Refugees Brought It Back to Life

(This article by Alessia Melchiorre was published by <https://reasonstobecheerful.world> on May 7, 2021)

*Camini was down to 300 residents when it transformed itself into a magnet for refugees. Now it's thriving.*  
By: Alessia Melchiorre Credit: Oreste Montebello

When Giuseppe Alfarano left Camini, his hometown in southern Italy, he became part of an exodus that had been in progress since the 1950s. The young man moved to Florence to attend university, and during those years felt a knife to his heart — the pain and guilt familiar to many Italians who depart from the impoverished south each year. Calabria — the region that forms the toe of Italy's "boot," where Camini is located — has lost almost 65,000 residents since the last census in 2011.

Years after settling in Florence and starting a family, Alfarano got a job opportunity in Camini and returned to his original home. He found a diaspora that had grown as critical as a deadly wound. The small, rural village was down to 300 residents, and many houses in the historic center had been empty and abandoned for years. There were no bars, no restaurants, no schools, no cash machines and barely any internet connection.

With his friend Rosario Zurzolo, Alfarano founded a cooperative that began restoring the abandoned homes. Then, in 2011, a consequential decision set the town on its path to revival: Camini would fashion itself as a hub for resettling refugees.

The cooperative, now led by Zurzolo and funded by Italy's ministry of the interior, organized a systematic approach to attracting refugees to the village. The new arrivals were given accommodation in the refurbished homes. They were offered free classes in Italian language, ceramics, carpentry, and Italian and Syrian cuisine, to name a few. And in the vineyards and olive groves that had been abandoned by the Italians who fled, the refugees learned how to produce the region's famous olive oils and wines. The revitalized town has since become a destination for curious travelers, and Camini's newly restored homes are now marketed to tourists for conferences, yoga retreats and volunteering excursions. "Hospitality for us is like a mission," Zurzolo says when asked about the origins of the resettlement project. The goal was not merely to resettle migrants, but to bring new life to Camini.

Now, with the arrival of families from Syria, Nigeria, Libya, Iraq, Pakistan and many other countries, the cooperative continues to expand. It recently opened an after-school club for the kids, a nursery school, a teaching farm, a restaurant and a bar. Operating these facilities doubles as job training for the newcomers who help run them. Even some Italians are returning to the village — in the



last three years, the town saw more than 20 new births, and as of 2019 the population had risen to 726. The old primary school, which had closed, has reopened and doubled its number of classrooms. Today the cooperative employs 40 locals and has many different projects. One of those is "Ama-la," in which women refugees learn traditional weaving techniques from the Calabrian masters.

"The [weaving] frame has this enveloping structure that gives it a rhythm where you can unravel the threads and knot them again," says Serena Tallarico, a psychologist and medical anthropologist. Tallarico launched the weaving project to help the participating refugees, many of whom had experienced war and trauma, build resilience. The rhythm of the weaving frame, she says, is one of interruption and fracture — typical of traumatic experience. In other words, she says, they are weaving their way out of their traumas.

Amal, one the Syrian refugees participating in the workshop, already harbored a passion for needlecraft back in Damascus. In 2016 she and her family arrived in Italy from Beirut through a humanitarian corridor. In Camini they found peace and stability. Amal's daughter, Douaa, 20, works as an assistant project manager at the workshop, hoping one day to make the activity completely sustainable. "I remember everything of the war and I only see a future here in Italy now," she says. "The pain is always with us, but we feel very blessed to be here in Camini."

Alfarano, who became mayor in 2016, is happy to have them. He becomes emotional when talking about it. "Now when you walk in the streets at noon you can smell the scent of lunch or meet the kids playing and shouting," he says. "The town is alive."



# Compassion in Action - International Art Contest

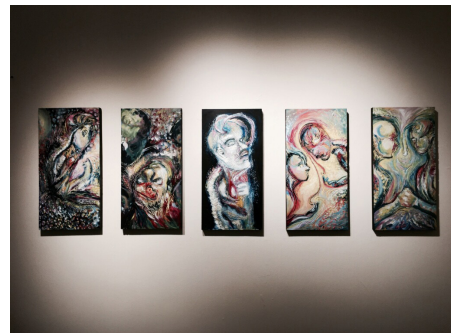
By Sneha Anand

An elderly woman laid in her hospital bed, hooked up to a ventilator to expand her lungs, with IV needles pumping fluids through her veins. She was in her last days, her battle with COVID-19 was coming to an end. The large room increased her feelings of isolation, there was no one at her side. The physician entered the room wearing full PPE and carrying a large laptop. He sat by the woman's side as she wept from joy when seeing her grandchildren on the other side of the screen. With trembling fingers, she took the physician's hand in her own and said her last goodbye. In that moment, the doctor provided her the greatest gift. Companionship, courage and compassion.

Stories like this have powerful messages, showing the purest form of humanity. In this past year, our world has shifted dramatically, and unique challenges have arisen universally. These anecdotes of empathy serve a valuable purpose: to invoke positive change.

The international art contest was created because we strongly believe in the virtue of compassion, which means Anukampa in Jainism. Our goal is to bring together people from around the world under the common theme of compassion, by capturing their imagination and expressing it in the form of artwork. It's important to highlight compassion, especially in this critical socio-political time period, where many underprivileged and undeserved communities have been marginalized.

Compassion is the basic tenet of all religions in the world and it is applicable to even those who are not religious. We believe it is important to highlight compassion as that is one basic quality that brings all of us together irrespective of our backgrounds. We wanted this contest to have international roots to highlight that compassion is truly a global



phenomenon. You don't need to be a Hindu, Jain, Christian or a Muslim to be compassionate.

Artists can increase empathy in others through their work, eliciting that feeling from people who may be numb from all the terrible things going on in the world, making the viewer more sensitive and vulnerable.

Our message is bound to spread across borders. We are hoping to inspire hundreds of people to embrace the spirit of compassion and our effort is to encourage more and more people to engage in acts of empathy. Art is a powerful tool that can be used to raise awareness and ignite change. It does not need a language for communication. Hence it is the simplest way to share an idea or express an emotion. We encourage these artists to be the trailblazers of our generation and pave the way for positive social change.

Be part of this journey, encourage artist in you and participate in art contest and spread the love.

Please go to our website and register for art submission.

[www.internationalartcontest.org](http://www.internationalartcontest.org)

International Art contest is organized by Anekan Community Center and sponsored by Sarva Mangal Family Trust and Tarsadia Foundation. There are 5 categories ages 5-10, 11-15, 16-21, adults and professionals. Renowned Judges will choose and awards will be up to \$1000 in each category. Chosen artwork will be in Virtual art gallery.

For further inquiry and details please contact Jayana Shah at [artcontestinternational@gmail.com](mailto:artcontestinternational@gmail.com)/ 714-856-4256

COMPASSION

# Southern California Organizations come together to conduct Vaccine Drives

By Shrenik Shah

Parth and Uchita Parikh of *Pico Care Pharmacy* have been vaccinating people using the COVID-19 Vaccines given to them by LA County. Manubhai & Rikaben Shah of *MSI & Sarva Mangal Family Trust (SMFT)* connected with them and arranged vaccines for their employees. They also discussed giving vaccines to South Asians. Manubhai then called Dr. Nitin Shah and connected him with Parth. Nitin called BU Patel to use Sanatan Dharma Temple as a location and to work with *Joy of Sharing Foundation (JOSF)*. Nitin called Adhir Shah for help with volunteers. Parth Parikh, Dr. Nitin Shah & Adhir Shah gathered late on a Sunday afternoon in mid-March with one common goal: how to help South Asians and others. They wanted to help people from all backgrounds, seniors, those technologically challenged, and unhoused neighbors receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Nitin called Raji & Payal of *Sahaas for Cause* for help with youth volunteers for registration and also to serve snacks to Vaccine recipients. Thus started a long partnership between *Pico Care Pharmacy, SMFT, JOSF, Sahaas for Cause* with Adhir and Dr. Nitin Shah.

What started as a vaccine drive for South Asians slowly turned into a Saturday routine benefiting All Americans! People of all races, ethnicities from near and far have come to receive much awaited COVID-19 Vaccine. We have been giving Moderna vaccines and everyone is assured that they will receive the second dose also after 4 weeks at the same location. First doses are administered inside and second doses via drive thru. The Vaccination includes a simple 4 step process: (1) pre-registration for their online appointment (2) on-site check-in (3) vaccination and (4) 15-minute waiting. During the weekdays *Sahaas for Cause* volunteers have provided tremendous support with the registration - especially to seniors and technologically challenged people. Over 26 different community organizations and *SAHARA* have helped reach out to community members.

A special vaccination drive was also taken to the streets of Skid Row. In conjunction with *The Good Karma, LA & Mission ECHO*, we were able to help vaccinate our unhoused neighbors, pass out lunches, water, and snacks. This was featured on ABC News.

We have administered a total of 5221 doses as of Saturday, April 24th!. This has been a very rewarding experience for all organizations involved and the volunteers. The news of our success reached Northern California and the Jain Center of Northern California invited us to administer vaccines at their location in Milpitas on Monday, 3rd May!

For questions, please contact:

Adhir Shah (714-213-3288), Dr. Nitin Shah (562-244-9035), Parth Parikh (714-470-2309).

For registration, visit [www.picocarerx.com/sanatan](http://www.picocarerx.com/sanatan)



# महावीर तेरी एक झलक

सविता जैन



*Savita is a writer, singer, choreographer, and an amazing anchor! She volunteers with multiple non-profit organizations, including JAINA. Savita is a Jain Sutra teacher and has taught many adults and children stotras such as Bhaktamar and Mahaveerashtak stotra.*

जब भी मैं समता में होती हूँ, बस यही सोचती रहती हूँ के -  
क्या, मैं कहीं आसपास तेरे थी महावीर,  
जब तूने जगत को देशना दी थी ?  
अहिंसा, अपरिग्रह, अनेकांत की शिक्षा दी थी ?

क्या, मैं कहीं आसपास तेरे थी महावीर,  
जब तूने करुणा भरी नजर से चंडकौशिक को नई जीवनी दी थी  
और संगम के सारे अपराधों को माफ़ कर, नई राह दीखाई थी ?

क्या, मैं कहीं आसपास तेरे थी महावीर,  
जब तूने चंदनबाला को अपनी शिष्या स्वीकार कर दीक्षा दी थी  
और गौतम को कर्म खपाने खातिर दुरी दी थी ?

पत्थर, पानी, नदी, हवा, पेड़, पौधे, नदी, हवा, पशु-पक्षी, नर-नारी  
क्या किसी भी रूप में; मैं कहीं आसपास तेरे थी महावीर?

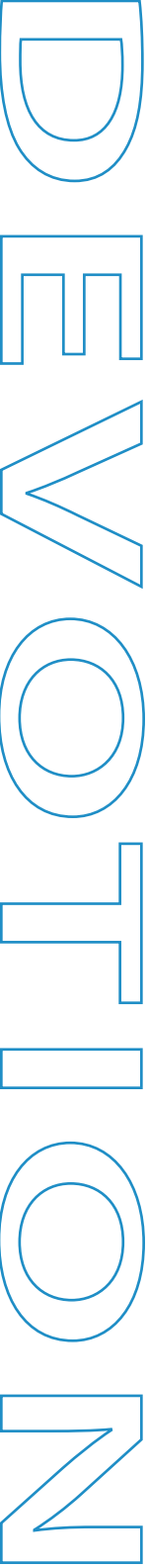
और अगर थी. तो वो ममता, करुणा, दया, समता को जीवन का सार मान,  
मैं क्यों न अपना पाई?

कैसे तेरे देवानांप्रिय के पुकार को सुन न पाई?  
क्यों तेरे-मेरे, अच्छे-बुरे, काम-क्रोध के जंजाल में फस गई,  
और फसती ही चली गई?

क्या तेरी आभा का एक भी कण मुझे छु ना पाया था? शायद नहीं !  
वर्ना यूँ पांचवें आरे में गोता न खाती !

पर एक झलक तो तेरी मैंने शायद पाई ही होगी कभी,  
तभी तो मनुष्य भव में जनम लेकर जैन कुल में हूँ आई !  
गुरु आशीर्वाद, गुरु भिक्षा की सदा ही ललचाई  
तन से ही नहीं, मन से भी सच्चा जैन बनने की ऊँची भावना है भायी !

तेरे भूमि से दूर रहकर भी हूँ तुझमे समाई  
हाँ, शायद, शायद ये उसी पुनवानी की है कहानी,  
जो आजतक है चलती आई,  
के किसी जनममें मैंने..  
तेरी झलक जरूर थी पाई,  
महावीर, तेरी एक झलक जरूर थी पाई !



## Prayers in Jainism

Ref: Jain Philosophy and Practice - 2 (JAINA Education Series 401 - Level 4 )

In all religious traditions, prayer plays an accepted mode of communication between the devotee and the divine. A prayer is a pure dialogue between the devotee and the divine, and thus does not need or require any material things. Everyone has equal opportunity to pray. Divine does not make distinction amongst the devotees regarding race, religion, nationality, or any other external criteria. The only thing that is required to approach Divine is unconditional devotion free from selfish motives and falsehoods. During a prayer, a devotee opens up his heart to the God.



Image by PublicDomainPictures from Pixabay

Out of all religious tradition, however, Jainism defines a special meaning to prayer. Jainism firmly believes in the doctrine of Karma and puts sole reliance on the development of one's spiritual advancement by one's own personal efforts. Jainism further exhorts its followers to develop Asharan Bhāvanā (nobody is your savior).

### What is the place of prayers in Jainism?

Since Jainism does not believe in God as a creator and destroyer of the universe or in the existence of any outside divine entity controlling our fate, it seems that any idea of prayer would be irrelevant to Jainism. If prayers could please Siddha (a liberated soul) then some prayers could also displease Siddha. The soul,

when it has become Siddha, has no attachments. Its character is purely that of a knower and a seer. Thus, if Siddha could bestow favors, then attributing such human frailties to a Siddha (liberated soul) would naturally mean that Siddha is not liberated. According to the doctrine of Karma, all results must be sought in that doctrine and unless the prayers are adjusted in the Karma doctrine, they are not fruitful.

However, it would be very wrong to say that prayers have no place in Jain philosophy. The real essence of prayers in Jainism is nothing other than appreciation and adoration of the virtues of the five supreme beings (Pancha Paramesthi) and the expression of ardent desire to achieve these virtues in one's own life. Jain scriptures elaborate these virtues of Pancha Paramesthi, namely Arihanta, Siddha, Āchārya, Upādhyāy and Sādhu. It is basic to Jain belief that the Tirthankars (prophets) and their teachings are only to point out to us the way to achieve liberation. However, how to acquire liberation and how to put these teachings into the practice, is entirely left to us. Jainism proclaims that every soul has the potential to become God. In Jainism, the definition of God is one who has attained liberation and not the creator of the universe. Tirthankars, upon attaining omniscience, devoted their lives to preaching and showing us the way to attain omniscience. The path shown by those who have achieved liberation must be studied with utmost respect and sincerity, because it is the proven path to liberation. We are very thankful to Tirthankars for preaching and showing us the path to ultimate liberation.

In prayer, we express our gratitude, praise, and enumerate their virtues and we wish that such virtues might be imbibed in our lives. Such prayers constantly remind us what made them achieve the ultimate goal, and in turn, help us achieve that goal. This, in Jain philosophy, is the true meaning of prayers, and it is in this manner that one also obtains the fruits of his prayers.

It is a truth that human mind gets oriented to the thoughts which it entertains constantly. An oriented and conditioned mind always impels the physical senses of the body to follow the pursuits of its liking. If we are fully convinced of the teaching of the great Tirthankars, we will totally surrender ourselves to these teachings. A constant reminder that the practice of the path shown by Tirthankars is the true

and the only path to liberation will help mold our life to be a true believer in the teachings of Tirthankars.

### Prayers: Reminder of Virtues of the Tirthankars

Prayers in Jainism mean exactly this, a constant reminder of the virtues of the Tirthankars. It is the best prayer we can offer and if these prayers help spiritually uplift our soul, we are surely justified in saying that it is due to the 'favor' of the great masters who have shown the path to us. For indeed the masters have shown favor to us, as to the whole humanity, in pointing out the right way to attain liberation.

The prayer offered by the great Āchārya Samantabhadra in the following words clearly makes this point: 'Oh Bhagawān, you are really a Vitarāga (one who has shed all passions) and so you are not pleased by prayers nor are you displeased by adverse criticism, because you have destroyed all types of adversary feelings. All the same, the remembrance of your merits purifies one's mind from all sins'.

It is interesting to note that the most outstanding Jain prayer, known as Navakār Mantra, does not refer to any individual person and requests nothing in return. It does nothing more than offering sincere veneration to those souls who are already liberated or are on the path of liberation. Pancha Paramēsthi, the five supreme beings (those have been liberated and those who are on the path of liberation). Jains bow down to them all, because they have already attained what was worth attaining, self - realization (Samyag Darshan), or because they are striving to attain what is worth attaining - liberation (Moksha).

As Āchārya Hemchandra puts it: "I bow down to him whose all passions like attachment and malice, which sow the seeds of birth and rebirth, have been destroyed. It doesn't matter whether he is Brahmā, Vishnu, Shankar or Jina."

### Prayers: A Passionate Devotion

Jain prayer plays a very significant role in the life of a devotee who observes rites, rituals and worship of Divine with passionate devotion. Jain prayer, though it is not to please God, is certainly an important moral act. During passionate devotion, no bad karma can come in and fruition of bad karma is not felt. It expresses inspiration to the soul, peace to the mind and purity to the active life. On one hand the metaphysics, the doctrine and theories, enjoys due importance in Jainism as a system, but then on the

other hand Jainism being theistic in more than one aspect, the God of its theism, the Arihanta and Siddha always triumphs completely over all the legalism of its doctrines and theories.

It is not fully correct that there is no 'divine grace' or 'God's grace' in Jainism. In fact, one may get numerous evidences in support of the grace if we survey the Jain Yoga and Ārādhanā

### Forms of Prayer

The three main ways to pray are physical, verbal, and mental.

**Physical Prayers:** Adoration, bowing down before the idols, performing the ritual called Pujā with various materials like water, flowers, sandal wood paste, incense, waving of light before the deity, dance, food offering are different forms of physical prayers.

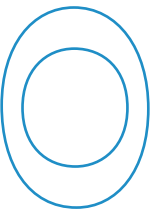
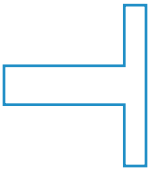
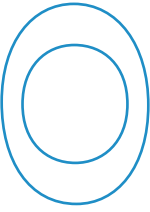
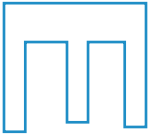
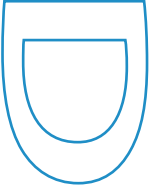
**Verbal Prayer:** It is the main form of prayer. It may be in the form of prose or poetry, very short mantra, form of a hymn (Stotra) or quite elaborate as in various forms of Pujā. In all these forms, the devotee invokes pure thoughts in his mind through the medium of sound, which have a cause and effect relationship with some of the most sublime emotions produced in the human mind.

**Mental Prayer:** This is the best form of prayer from the spiritual point of view. It is carried out silently by meditation and contemplation. This kind of prayer can be effectively performed only by an advanced aspirant who is well versed in right spiritual tenets and has good control over his mind and senses. Normally, when the prayer starts, it is vocal in nature and later on when the aspirant is fully and totally engrossed in prayers, the vocal prayer is taken over by the silent prayer.

### Conclusion:

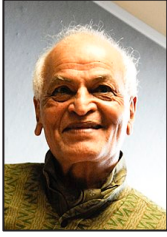
Prayer, which may be physical, verbal or mental, is a mode of communication between the devotees, and the divine. The devotee could be distressed, desirous, inquisitive or an enlightened soul. The only real thing that is required to approach Him is divine love free from selfish motive or falsehood.

Jains believe that Arihanta and Siddha have no attachment or hatred. They cannot give anything to anybody, and one is responsible for his own deeds. In prayer, one has the appreciation and adoration of the Bhagawān's virtues and the desire to achieve the same virtues in one's own life.



# Faith and Science - A Jain Perspective

By Satish Kumar



*Satish Kumar is an Indian British activist and speaker. He has been a Jain monk, nuclear disarmament advocate and pacifist. Now living in England, Kumar is founder and Director of Programmes of the Schumacher College international centre for ecological studies, and is Editor Emeritus of Resurgence & Ecologist magazine.*

Jain science is founded on the principle of *Anekant*. Which simply means that there is no 'one single truth'. Truth is multi-dimensional and multifaceted. *Anekant* also means that there is no final truth that we can grasp intellectually or communicate verbally. The search for truth is a life-long journey. Truth is a mystery to be discovered constantly. Truth is a process and not a product.

In Jainism we believe in the principle of "truth diversity." There are many truths. As we have religious diversity, cultural diversity, linguistic diversity, racial diversity, and biodiversity we also need to recognise diversity and plurality of truths. Truths are not fixed phenomena; truths are the ever-emerging human experience.

In Jainism the search for truth is complemented by the practice of non-violence. Whatever truth we discover, we need to communicate it with respect to other people and their truths. In our pursuit of truth, we must avoid harming anyone, physically, emotionally, or intellectually. Reverence for all life is an integral part of the search for truths. Thus, Jains promote the search for truth, without dogmatism or arrogance.

In Jain science truth and non-violence cannot be separated.

For Jains the practice of non-violence is paramount. We are required to be nonviolent to ourselves, to all people and to nature without condition or qualification. All diverse forms of Nature; animals, forests, rivers, and oceans have souls. Even soil has soul. Nature is not a machine, and the Earth is not a dead rock; Nature is alive, and our precious planet Earth is a living organism. Therefore, we must adhere to the ideal of reverence for all life, human life as well as other than human life.

The value of Nature must never be measured in terms of its usefulness to humans. Nature is not, and should never be considered, merely a resource for the economy, Nature is life itself. We should remain mindful of the fact that Nature has intrinsic value. Nature is sacred. Nature is good in itself, irrespective of its usefulness to humans. Jains would happily agree with the poet William Blake who said, "Nature is the imagination itself." And with Shakespeare also who celebrated "Tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything." Here Jain science and Western poetry come together.

The beauty of biodiversity is in its plurality and multiplicity of life forms. From small insects to large elephants and from honeybees to big human beings are made of the same elements — earth, air, fire and water or the same chemical elements— carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen. There is no hint of a hierarchy here. This is simply a dance of diversity. For Jains the notion of equality of life is built on the foundation of the unity of life.

Of course, nature feeds Nature. Life maintains life. Living organisms sacrifice themselves to nourish and nurture each other. All living organisms reciprocate for mutual survival. Therefore, taking and giving of life as food is within the acceptable limits of violence. However, such violence must remain minimal and only for survival.

This is the context in which Jains mostly consume plant-based food. Being a vegetarian or a vegan is an absolute rule. Meat eating and Jainism is like chalk and cheese, they never go together. A plant-based diet helps humans to make a smaller footprint on our living planet. Jains are instructed by our sacred scriptures to practice minimalism and engage in the least interference in the workings of Nature. We should leave Nature alone as much as we can. According to our philosophy we are all interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent yet all creatures are entitled

to live their life in freedom. We have no ownership of Nature. Our responsibility is to have a respectful relationship with Nature. That is the basis upon which we honour the rights of nature as we honour the rights of humans.

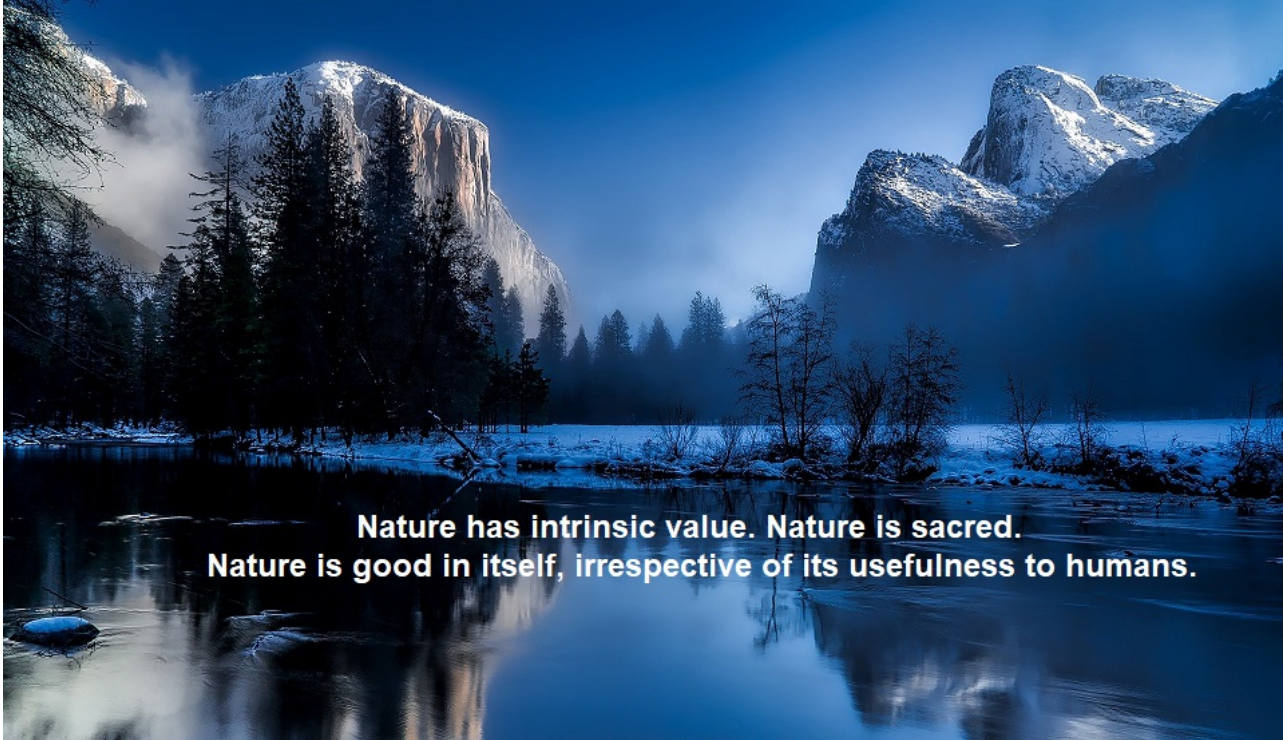


Image by David Mark from Pixabay

This is why the ecologically inspired Jains are campaigning for the reduction of meat production around the world. The practice of factory farming, the keeping of huge numbers of animals in cruel confinement contributes to the climate crisis. Large scale monoculture to provide grain to feed animals and meat production causes 30% of carbon emissions and creates climate catastrophe. We Jains are actively involved in the promotion of a plant-based diet for reasons of compassion and non-violence to address the crisis of climate change.

In Jain science, there is no separation between Nature and humans. We believe in the absolute integrity of life. The etymological meaning of the word Nature simply means birth. Everything born is Nature. Humans are born, so humans are Nature too. The dignity of diversity is rooted in the unity of life. Unity and diversity are two aspects of one single reality.

The world is facing the climate crisis because faith has been disconnected from science. Science and technology have been used by commercial interests in pursuit of unlimited economic growth and industrial development largely dependent on fossil fuels. So, in the long-term interest of climate stability and the sustainability of the living earth science needs to be wedded to spiritual values. As Albert Einstein said, science without religion is blind and religion without science is lame. science and religion always need to act together. Scientists need to commit themselves to a future where their scientific research will not be used for harmful purposes. As doctors take the Hippocratic oath: "First Do No Harm," scientists need to take the same oath to do no harm, to refuse to engage in research and development which may harm people or harm our perfect planet Earth.

Similarly, economists, Industrialists and politicians need to take the Hippocratic oath to avoid harm to biodiversity and to the integrity of our biotic community and our eco-system.

We need to learn from this climate crisis and resolve that in future we will not engage in activity which may produce other disastrous consequences, similar to the climate catastrophe. Faiths need to embrace science. Particularly climate science. Without science faiths, religions and spirituality can become dogmatic and fundamentalist. There is much that scientists can teach faith leaders and vice versa. We need to come together in humility and mutual respect.



# Lord Mahāvīra's Incredible Journey to Kevala-Jñāna

By Dr. Parveen Jain



Dr. Parveen Jain is a longtime leader in the vibrant Jain community in the San Francisco Bay Area. He led a team to build the Jain Temple of San Francisco Bay Area and is deeply involved with the growth of Siddhachalam in New Jersey. He is very passionate about promoting the message of nonviolence and is enthusiastic about creating educational platforms for the dissemination of dharmic doctrines, especially the Jain doctrine. He is an author of the book titled "An Introduction to Jain Philosophy". ([parveen@jainfamily-us.com](mailto:parveen@jainfamily-us.com)).

The incredible spiritual journey of Lord Mahāvīra to attain *kevala-jñāna* is a source of immense inspiration with immeasurable edifying value. By studying the life of Lord Mahāvīra, one can imagine the level of perseverance one must exert towards the goal of attaining *kevala-jñāna*. His life teaches us that the journey brings immense spiritual pleasure despite extraordinary efforts. For a pursuit of the same end-goal, grasping the "real value" of that pleasure and envisioning the end-goal splendor are essential to succeeding in the endeavor.

Lord Mahāvīra's *jīva* reached the summit of spiritual perseverance after toiling through innumerable lifetimes. At some point in its birth-death cycles, his *jīva* awakened to recognize the soul's exquisite characteristics. That would be his *avatāra bhava*. According to Śvetāmbara scriptures, the awakening occurred in the life of Nayasāra, a village head, twenty-seven reincarnation (*bhava*) before Mahāvīra's final life. Digambara scriptures attribute that to his *jīva*'s birth as Purūravā, an indigenous person (*bhīla*), thirty-four reincarnation before the final life. Irrespective of the number of prior reincarnations, it is critical to note that there was a life when Mahāvīra's *jīva* realized the right vision (*samyag-draṣṭi*) and right faith (*samyaktva*) to pursue the ultimate liberation.

During the journey towards the final reincarnation in pursuit of *kevala-jñāna*, Mahāvīra's *jīva* went through uncountable additional births in *tiryāṅca* species (plants, animals, and insects) beside the twenty-seven or thirty-four significant or "notable" reincarnations (*bhava*).

Jain scriptures place the reincarnation of Nayasāra or Purūravā millions of years ago. In the subsequent reincarnations, whenever in the human body, Mahāvīra's *jīva* continued to improve its perception (*darśana*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and conduct (*cāritra*) towards perfection to be finally born as Vardhamāna – the birth name of Lord Mahāvīra. As propounded by Lord Mahāvīra himself, this evolutionary progression

is not exclusive to him. All likewise inclined *jīvas* have the capability to track similar trajectories.

In its final birth (*bhava*) in 599 BCE, Lord Mahāvīra's *jīva* possessed *mati-jñāna* (empirical knowledge), *śruta-jñāna* (scriptural or learned knowledge), and *avadhi-jñāna* (clairvoyance knowledge) at birth. These are the first three of the five progressive stages of enlightened knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*). The purpose of his last birth was to acquire the remaining two stages of *samyag-jñāna*, namely, *manaḥ-prāyaya-jñāna* (mind-reading knowledge or capturing the mental activity of other sentient beings) and, ultimately, *kevala-jñāna* (supreme wisdom) to attain the status of omniscient.

Mahāvīra had a princely life for approximately thirty years, but he lived like a hermit with minimal use and no attachment to his worldly possessions. He displayed uncommon vision, wisdom, and supreme bravery (*vīrya*) during his early years. As elaborated in numerous texts, Mahāvīra faced many challenges, even in his youth, from adversaries but calmly handled and pacified every challenge without ever flaunting his valor or other supreme characteristics. Compassionate instincts always guided his demeanor, and equanimity was one of his inherent characteristics.

Lord Mahāvīra knew that the attainment of enlightenment – the primary purpose of his last worldly life – would require rigorous efforts and unmatched tenacity. As much as he wanted to initiate his ascetic life at the earliest, Mahāvīra did not want to distress his parents and decided not to leave home so long as they were alive.

Soon after their demise, Mahāvīra was ready to renunciate worldly life, but his brother, Nandivardhan, was grieved and pleaded with him not to leave soon after their parents' departure. Again, out of empathy for his brother, Mahāvīra postponed his initiation into asceticism (*dīkṣā*) for two years.



Finally, in 569 BCE, two years after his parents' demise, Lord Mahāvīra decided to renounce worldly life when he was thirty years old. As described in verses (*sūtras*) 111-114 of the Kalpa Sūtra, Lord Mahāvīra left home to start his ascetic life in the afternoon at the auspicious moment called Vijaya (success), on the tenth day called Suvrata of the month called Mārgaśīrṣa, the first month of winter of the Jain Lunisolar calendar. The occasion of his transition from a worldly life to asceticism became a prideful public celebration signifying that in Jain Dharma, renunciation is joyous for the individual in pursuit of salvation and a matter of pride for their family and the community.

After a celebratory procession through his hometown of Kuṇḍapura (also referred to as Kuṇḍaggāma), Lord Mahāvīra arrived at a park called Jñātakhandavana (cited as Nāyasaṇḍavaṇa in some accounts). There, he performed the rituals of initiation into the ascetic life (*dīkṣā*) under an auspicious tree called Aśoka after giving away his princely possessions such as clothes and jewelry. Then, in another ascetic-initiation custom called Pañcamuṣṭhi Loca, Mahāvīra plucked his hair in four fistfuls from his head and one fistful of facial hair. After that, he took the five supreme vows of *ahiṃsā* (nonviolence), *satya* (truthfulness), *acaurya or asteya* (non-stealing), *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness), and *brahmacarya* (celibacy) and started the life of a homeless (*anāgārika*) mendicant.

According to Digambaras, Mahāvīra discarded all the clothes right at the time of *dīkṣā*, and the Śvetāmbaras describe that he retained a single piece of cloth at that time and discarded it approximately thirteen months later to then become possession-less (*nirgrantha*) mendicant.

Lord Mahāvīra attained *manaḥ-prāyaya-jñāna* at the beginning of his ascetic endeavor. Like many other aspects, the Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras differ in their timing. The Śvetāmbaras believe that it occurred right after his initiation into the ascetic life, but the Digambaras believe that this auspicious moment came approximately six months later.

After his initiation into the life of a renunciate, Mahāvīra proceeded to a village called Asthikato to begin his quest for *kevala-jñāna*. Thereon, he immersed himself into intense penance and austerities for over twelve years – to be precise, twelve years, five months, and fifteen days (4,545 days)— according to some Jain scholars, it took one month longer (4575 days). During his penance, Mahāvīra displayed complete non-attachment towards every material thing. His attitude of non-attachment extended to his own body as well,

although he never detested or deliberately abused his body because of his deep respect for his bodily existence. Mahāvīra propounded that a living being can attain enlightenment only through the human body, which is impossible in any other mode of living beings' existence – even as the heavenly beings – and hence, his deep regards for his own body.

Some highlights of his rigorous penance of over twelve years are:

- Lord Mahāvīra fasted without water (*nirjala upvāsa*) most of the time and took meals with or without water on only three hundred and twenty-five (325) days out of 4545 days of his penance. His fasts ranged from two days to six months each.
- He spent most of his time in meditation (*dhyāna*) and remained quiet (*mauna*) most of the time. Among the objects of his meditation exercises were Ūdharva Loka (the celestial realm), Adho Loka (the realm of hellish beings) and Tiryañca Loka (the realm of animals, plants, and insects).
- Mahāvīra had only forty-eight minutes of sleep during the entire duration of his penance. Whenever he felt drowsy, he took a deep breath and shook off his lethargy.
- He lived in solitude, except for a couple of years when Gośālaka accompanied him.
- Mahāvīra was always on the move to avoid developing any affinity towards any place or people. Except for the four months of rainy season every year, when he remained at one location, he stayed most of the time in uninhabited areas. Mahāvīra stayed for a maximum of one day in a village or five days in a town throughout his penance.
- Mahāvīra cultivated “giving up the body” (*utsrstakaya*) and “renouncing the body” (*tyakta-deha*) during his penance to forsake attachment (*moha*) towards his physical being. He endured illnesses and bodily injuries without seeking any medical help.
- He faced numerous adversities that tested his commitment to nonviolence. Nature, animals, and insects caused hardships like severe weather, biting him, and crawling over him, respectively. The humans caused suffering out of jealousy or ignorance. And gods and demons caused some more to test, disturb, distress, torture, and humiliate him. He endured everything



with compassion (*karuṇā*), unyielding non-attachment (*anāsakti*), friendliness (*maitrī*) and equanimity (*madhyasthā*).

- Mahāvīra gained complete control over his mind, body, and speech by restraining his senses and mental trepidations.
- Lord Mahāvīra encountered numerous fascinating incidences throughout his twelve-and-a-half years of perseverance. Every one of those incidences had a purpose, such as inspiring someone to forsake ominous traits and redeem previously earned karmas; enlightening the society of its social, political, and cultural ill-practices; discarding his own previously accumulated karmas; and so on. All of those episodes are lessons in spirituality, tolerance, leadership, righteous living, pluralistic society and other worthy traits.

In 556 BCE, during the thirteenth year of his penance, Mahāvīra had accomplished all of the virtuous characteristics that enable *kevala-jñāna*. As elucidated in 120th sūtra of the Kalpa Sūtra, after over twelve years intense penance, Mahāvīra was engrossed in blissful meditation in a farm owned by a householder named Śyāmaka, near a temple called Vijayāvarta. The farm was on the banks of a river called Rjuvalika in Jrambhika village.



*Rjuvalika River*

It was the tenth day called Suvata, of the month called Vaiśākha of the Vīra Nirvāṇa Saṃvat calendar—the Jain lunisolar calendar (April-May of the Gregorian calendar). The moon was in its waxing phase in the season's fourth fortnight – the second month of summer. Lord Mahāvīra had taken only one meal without water in the previous three days. He started meditation (*dhyāna*) under the Sun under a tree

named Śāla in a cow-milking posture (*goduhāsana* position in *ukaḍū* shape) with his knees lifted and toes touching the ground.

Lord Mahāvīra was deeply engrossed in blissful meditation (*śukla-dhyāna*), concentrating on the following eight virtuous characteristics of *siddhas*, the enlightened and liberated beings.

1. *Samyag-jñāna* (enlightened wisdom) for the culmination of *jñānavarnīya-karma*.
2. *Samyag-darśana* (enlightened perception) for the culmination of *darśanavarnīya-karma*.
3. *Samyag-cāritra* (enlightened conduct) for the culmination of *mohaniya-karma*.
4. *Anantvīrya* (hinder-less existence with infinite vigor) for the culmination of *antarāya-karma*.
5. *Avyābādha-sukha* (*unhindered bliss*) on the nature of *vedniya-karma*.
6. *Akṣaya-sthiti* (immortality or liberation from life-death cycles) on the nature of *āuśya-karma*.
7. *Arupitva* (formless or shapeless) on the nature of *nāma-karma*.
8. *Aguru-laghutva* (equanimity in *siddha* state, or “all souls are equal” form) on the nature of *gotra-karma*.



During his blissful meditation, on that day, at that place, and at an auspicious moment (*mahūrta*) in the hour called Vijaya in the afternoon around dusk (*sandhyā*) time, Mahāvīra achieved *kevala-jñāna* – the ultimate reward for his arduous penance.

He had attained the ultimate, supreme, unabridged, unbounded, complete, and unambiguous knowledge about everything in the universe. He became omniscient.

Mahāvīra had annihilated all of his harm-causing and destructible (*ghātika* or *ghāṭiya*) karmas (first four of the above list). He had achieved victory over the most hurtful enemies: the passions (*kashāyes*) of anger, ego, deceit, and greed. All of his sentiments of attachment (*rāga*) and malice (*dveśa*) and allurements had dissipated. He became a *vītrāga* – the one devoid of all types of attachments. He had attained the troika of *samyag-darśana*, *samyag-jñāna*, and *samyag-cāritra*. He became an *arihanta* (or *arahanta*).



*Jinalay at Shri Bhagwan Mahavir Kevalajnan Kalyanak Bhumi*

This elusive and most-difficult-to-achieve victory was the reason for the honorific title of Mahāvīra, meaning the Great Hero, by which he would be known thereon. His birth name, Vardhmāna was left behind.

Soon after Mahāvīra's *kevala-jñāna*, the heavenly beings (gods) arranged two congregations, known as Samavaśarana to celebrate the occasion. They wanted to rejoice the initiation of Lord Mahāvīra as a *tīrthaṅkara* – a preceptor or ford maker. They were craving to hear the venerated teachings of Lord Mahāvīra, who was now a proficient expounder of

after having had the revelation of *tattva* (the fundamental truth).

All forms of living beings – humans, heavenly beings, hellish beings, and animals – attend the Samavaśaranas. When the *tīrthaṅkara* expounds, all species of living beings comprehend the teachings in their native language because the *tīrthaṅkara*'s messages are transmitted in “universal” language irrespective of the spoken dialect.

The first assembly took place on the Vipulācala hills near Rajagirī. However, none of his disciples were present at that assembly, so the second one was held in Mahāsena gardens in Pāvāpuri sixty-six days later. During the second Samavaśarana, Mahāvīra ordained Indrabhūti, a renowned *brāhmīna* (Vedic high priest), as his first disciple, *gaṇadhara*, and named him Gautama. He ordained ten additional *ganadharas* the same day, two of whom were Gautama Swāmi's brothers.

After that, Lord Mahāvīra started unrelenting efforts to transform the society towards righteous living that is guided by nonviolence (*ahimsā*), friendship (*maitri*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) towards all living beings along with a lifestyle driven by spiritual joy (*pramoda*) and equanimity (*madhyastha*). Numerous scriptures expound on the teachings of Lord Mahāvīra.

Tīrthaṅkara Lord Mahāvīra lived for thirty years after his *kevala-jñāna* and in 527 BCE, when he was seventy-two years old, he attained *nirvāna* – the eternally liberated state of an enlightened *jīva* (soul) in a bodiless form. Tīrthaṅkara Lord Mahāvīra's *jīva* is now situated in *siddha-loka* at the top of the universe of Jain cosmology.



A longer version of the article is available at <https://www.parveenjain.com/blog>

# Lessons from the Life of Mahasati Chandanbala

By Anop R. Vora and Rajkumar Jain (Members of Jain Digest Editorial Staff)

## Story in Brief

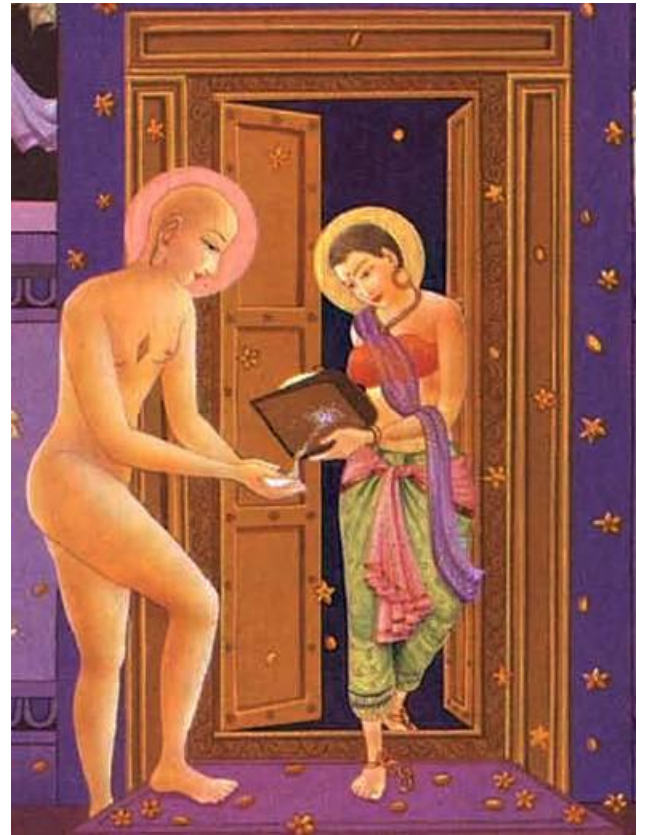
Most Jains know about the inspirational story of Chandanbala. The story itself is simple: She was the daughter of King Dadhivahan and Queen Dharini of the city of Champapuri, Bihar, India and was named Vasumati. In the old days, India was ruled by tiny kingdoms. They used to have territorial wars quite often with their neighboring kingdoms and the stronger kings used to take over the weaker ones by sheer force. When her father lost one of such wars, she and her mother decided to escape but got captured by an enemy soldier. He decided to sell her as a slave because this was an acceptable practice in those days. A rich merchant saw Vasumati in the slave market but by looking at her face and demeanor, he felt that she must be from a noble family and somehow had been separated. He made the necessary payment to the soldier and brought her home out of compassion, hoping that someday he could find her parents and unite them.

The merchant told his wife (Moola) to treat Vasumati as their daughter. They decided to name her as Chandanbala. Moola noticed the good looks of Chandanbala, became suspicious of her husband's motive and started worrying that her husband might dump her and marry Chandanbala.

When her husband went out of town on a business trip, Moola decided to get rid of her; so she called a barber and asked him to shave off her beautiful hair. Then she hired another worker and asked him to tie her legs with heavy shackles and lock her up in a dark room; after which she went to visit her parents' home in town.

When the merchant returned and did not see either his wife or Chandanbala, he found out what happened from one of the loyal servants. He immediately released Chandanbala and since she was hungry, he gave her boiled lentils and went to get more food and also a blacksmith to remove the shackles. She decided that she will eat the lentils only after offering them to a Sadhu first.

While she was waiting, Lord Mahavira stopped by for alms. One can just imagine the joy she must have felt! But then Lord looked at her and noticed that one of his pre-decided conditions for breaking his fast of 5 months and 25 days was still missing. She met all conditions except the tears in her eyes, and therefore Lord Mahavir turned away. Feeling heart-broken, tears started running down Chandanbala's face. In a crying voice, she once again requested the Lord to accept the food. Lord Mahavir saw the tears in her eyes and came back to accept the food knowing that all his conditions were met. Chandanbala put the lentils in Lord Mahavir's hand and felt very happy. The heavenly gods became aware of this event and celebrated it by breaking the shackles of Chandanbala, growing her hair back and dressing her as Princess with their magical powers. The local king found out about the story and took Chandanbala to his palace. Later on, she took Diksha and became a disciple of the Lord.



## Lessons we can learn from this story

Many of us know the inspirational story of Chandanbala. The story itself is simple but the messages it conveys are truly profound. The real benefit of this story is not just in memorizing it, discussing it, and performing a drama based upon it. Of course, these are all good auspicious activities to remind us of the legend; but we can get the most value from it if we dig deeper and study her reactions to difficult life events. We need to view them as a reflection of her praiseworthy inner state and find the lessons to mold our own day-to-day conduct. Here are a few of them worth considering.

### 1) Practice Equanimity during the Karmic Cycles

Chandanbala's story is a classic example showing how Karma plays out in our lives. She was born as a princess in a powerful king's family. But as the Karmic cycle took the turn for worse, she was being sold as a slave in the open market. Then a compassionate merchant came to her rescue and treated as his daughter. But then she became the victim of his wife (Moola)'s jealousy - leading to her being locked up in a room like a prisoner with shackles and having nothing to eat or drink for days. She remained peaceful, equanimous, and calm throughout her ordeal. She did not blame anyone.

Her fortunes changed greatly when she got the opportunity to offer food to Lord Mahavir who had been fasting and had decided not to break it till certain conditions were met. When the Lord determined that she had fulfilled all those conditions, including the tears of rolling down her cheeks while offering the alms of boiled lentils, the Lord accepted them and broke the fast. She showed utmost respect and reverence to him and was overjoyed with the wonderful opportunity to serve him. This was the turning point of her life. The karmic cycle had now turned positive.

We all run into unpleasant situations in life but fail to keep patience and equanimity at times. We overreact and start blaming the catalysts (NIMITAS) and creating the pain and misery for us. We all have learned that whatever happens to us is the result of our past karma; but often get carried away by our emotions and forget to put it in practice. Chandanbala shows us behavior of a True Jain which is worth emulating!

### 2) Show Utmost Reverence to Sadhu/Sadhvis

Chandanbala must have been very hungry when the merchant released her from the prison and gave her some boiled lentils to start with. Instead of consuming the lentils to feed herself, she thought of offering it to a Sadhu first and in her case, the Sadhu she was looking for turned out to be Lord Mahavir himself.

This tells us about her upbringing, her values. She shows so much reverence to Sadhus. We can take the inspiration from her story by helping the Sadhus and Sadhvis through the offering of food, clothing, and shelter whenever we spot an opportunity.

### 3) Do Not be a Victim of Your Passions

Moola became jealous of Chandanbala and put her in great hardships but could not change the positive change that was about to occur in the life of Chandanbala. The lesson we can learn is that jealousy is self-destructive and never pays in the long run. It also proves that one person cannot affect another person's destiny and everything in life is Karma driven.

### 4) Be Compassionate

First time the merchant saw Chandanbala, she was being offered as a slave in the open market. He recognized the nobility and purity on her face and brought her to his home out of compassion. This means if we are well-to-do, we should always be aware and on the lookout to help the people in dire situations. This is one of core teachings of Jainism.

### 5) Appreciate Virtues in Others

Moola saw Chandanbala as a potential threat and became envious and hateful; her husband was totally benevolent. Chandanbala provided the same catalyst (Nimita) to both; but there were two totally opposite reactions. Merchant saw her virtues, but his wife was too blind to see any. Lesson for us: We need to look at only "good" in others and be cognizant of our wrong perceptions about others.

### 6) Do Not Blame Others for Your Hardships

Chandanbala did not consider Moola at fault at any time. On the contrary she was grateful to her to have put her through what ultimately set her free on the ultimate path to salvation. It was only because of



Z

Moola's deeds that she was able to fulfill the 5 vows of Lord Mahavir to break his long fast.

Chandanbala was grateful; not bitter, which sets her apart from the most of us. Even though Moola had put her thru so much grief and sorrow, Chandanbala never let that cloud her thinking as she always thought it was her own karmas that she herself had to pay for and no one else was to blame for her own miseries in life. She had really understood the essence of Bhagwan's teachings.

### 7) Develop Faith

Most important thing we can learn from Chandanbala's story is developing faith in Bhagwan's teachings. With a strong faith in Karma Theory, the virtues such as forgiveness, equanimity, compassion, control over passions, will automatically blossom in us.

### Another Story from Chandanbala's Life

After Lord Mahavir achieved Keval Gyan, he established a fourfold order in the Jain community; at which time Chandanbala renounced the world, dedicated herself full time on the path of liberation and became his first nun (Sadhvi). Once her disciple, Sadhvi Mrugavati, had gone to attend a gathering of Bhagavan Mahavir and she was engrossed in listening to his sermon so much that she hardly realized that it was almost evening time. Consequently, she was late in returning to the Upashraya, whereupon Chandanbala reprimanded her. Mrugavati begged to be forgiven and felt bad that because of her carelessness her Guru had to be harsh with her. This genuine repentance resulted in the annihilation of harmful karmas and Mrugavati acquired Keval Gyan.

That night, when both of them were sleeping side-by-side, Mrugavati saw a serpent passing by. She lifted Chandanbala's arm up so that the creature could slide away. The movement of the arm woke up Chandanbala and she asked Mrugavati the reason for moving her hand. When Mrugavati told her about the seeing serpent in pitch dark, Chandanbala realized that Mrugavati had achieved Keval Gyan. She repented having reprimanded Mrugavati earlier for coming late from the sermon and asked for forgiveness. This repentance resulted in annihilation

of harmful karmas and Chandanbala also attained Keval Gyan.



### 8) Accept Your Faults and Ask for Forgiveness

The lesson to learn from these events is that we need to be mindful about our actions, accept our faults without hesitation and when we hurt the feelings of others even in a small way, we need to repent and ask for forgiveness instantly without waiting for the 'right moment'. A tight knot becomes much more difficult to untangle later on! When we do not accept our mistakes and take corrective steps, we keep doing the same mistakes over and over again; bringing more karma to us.

### Conclusion

The Gandhars (initial disciples) of Lord Mahavir must have realized quite early that most laymen would remember the stories far better than the scriptures. That is the reason one of the Agams (Jain scriptures) called Kathanuyog was exclusively devoted to powerful and inspirational stories. Many of us remember these stories from childhood but we should never forget that stories are not an end in themselves. We should always be in search of the morals each story conveys and shape our life accordingly. That was their noble intent. That is how we can derive the most benefit and enrich our lives.

Just learning about Jain religion is not sufficient for our spiritual progress; we need to change how we think and behave. For example, knowing that there are 8 types of karma, is not enough. We need to constantly be aware that whatever happens to us is due to our own past karma. Only then we can dream of achieving spiritual heights like Chandanbala did.

# Accomplishments of JAINA Academic Liaison Committee (ALC) Since February 2021

Compiled by Dr. Sulekh Jain, Dr. Nitin Shah, Dr. Jasvant Modi, Dr. Shugan Jain and Narendra Parson

In November 2020 JAINA published a 140-page special edition of Jain Digest magazine entirely devoted to Jain Academic Education and Pathshala activities and their growth. It is a very comprehensive issue and will be a useful resource for a long time. You can download it at: [https://www.jaina.org/mpage/Jain\\_Education\\_in\\_North\\_America](https://www.jaina.org/mpage/Jain_Education_in_North_America)

ALC is one of the most active committees of JAINA and is working diligently to establish Jain positions for study, teaching and research in Jain Dharma at universities and colleges in USA, Canada and other countries. Here, we provide you the latest developments.

## Jain Studies featured in Los Angeles Times on May 2, 2021:

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-05-02/jain-studies-finding-foothold-in-higher-education>

## JAINA ALC Membership

To make ALC more representative, active and dynamic, we added 2 new members, Dr. Shrenik Shah (Atlanta) and Avani Shah (Los Angeles). Now the ALC consist of 24 highly motivated and diverse Jain community leaders from North America, UK & India. We have 5 female members, 1 Jain youth leader (below 35 years of age), 3 current and Past Presidents of JAINA, several current and Past Vice Presidents of JAINA, Chairs of various JAINA committees and Presidents of Jain Organizations.

ALC meets regularly and few members meet quite frequently on Zoom as needed basis.

## New Gyan Mandirs Established

Working with many donors, we have established the following new academic positions:

### 1. Endowed Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program

With a donation of \$ One Million, 3 Jain donors (Drs. Meera and Jasvant Modi of LA, Mrs. Madhu and Dr Jagdish Sheth of Atlanta and Mrs. Raksha and Harshad Shah of LA) established the **Bhagwan Arnath** endowed Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program in Perpetuity at the **Candler School of Theology of Emory University in Atlanta, GA.**

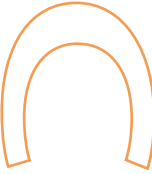
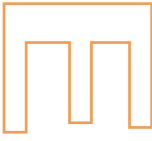
### 2. Acharya Mahapragya Professorship in Jain Studies

With a pledge of \$65 K each year for next 5 years, two main donors (Mr. Surendra Patawari of Antwerp, Belgium and Drs. Meera and Jasvant Modi of LA) established **Acharya Mahapragya** Professorship in Jain Studies at **Ghent University in Belgium.**

Ghent U has been a Center of Jain Studies for many years and has been educating and training scholars in Jainism and Jain Agamic languages for a long time. Two of its scholars will soon occupy Jain Academic positions at Cal State U Northridge, CA (Dr. Claire Maes) and at University of Toronto, Canada (Dr. Heleen De Jonckheere). The establishment of Professorship at Ghent University by the Jain community is the first of its kind anywhere in Europe and hopefully over time this will grow into a permanent position in perpetuity.

### 3. Bhagwan Munisuvrata Swami Endowed Professorship will soon be established at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

With a pledge of \$ one million by several donors in the Jain community in Metropolitan Chicago and Drs. Jasvant and Meera Modi of Los Angeles, an endowed professorship will be established very soon, at **University of**



**Illinois at Urbana Champaign.** University of Illinois with more than 50,000 students is a prestigious and flag ship university of the state of Illinois.

4. **Dr. Veena Howard appointed** the inaugural Chair holder to the Endowed Chair in Jain and Hindu Dharma at **California State University, Fresno.**

5. **Dr. Heleen De Jonckheere appointed** the Post-Doctoral Fellow to **Bhagwan Shitalnath** Post-Doctoral Fellowship in JAIN Studies at **University of Toronto, Canada.**

6. **Universities under consideration for Endowed Chair or Professorship**

We have started dialog with the following university

- University of California at Berkeley
- Rutgers University, NJ
- Hebrew University Jerusalem, Israel
- Victoria University at Wellington, New Zealand

## Other Activities

### Yearlong Fellowship in Prakrit

Prakrit is the language of Jain Agmas. To train scholars in Prakrit language, ALC working with International School for Jain Studies (ISJS) in India, has started Bhagwan Mahavir Fellowship Program in Prakrit. Under this program in 2019, 3 PhD scholars spent 8 months in India (was cut short due to Covid-19). We are offering the same fellowship program in 2021 and already 5 scholars are in the process of being interviewed for the final acceptance.

### MOUs Signed between ISJS and Several Universities

To build up on and connect with many Jain scholars, vast resources and capabilities, ISJS has signed memorandum of Understanding and cooperation with Ghent U (Belgium), Loyola Marymount U (LA) and Gujarat University (Ahmedabad). A working group is soon being established.

### Unique Opportunity for our Youths to learn Jainism during Summer 2021

A course is being developed (in consultation with and assistance from our own 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Jain youths here) by Professor Christopher Jain Miller (Bhagwan Mallinath Professor in Jain Studies at Loyola Marymount University). Here are some highlights about the course:

- This course is open to Jain teenagers and college students between the ages of 17 to 33 years.
- There are no pre-requisite to join.
- It is in English.
- It offers knowledge of Jainism in modern context.
- It will be On-line (from the comforts of your own home).
- It is open to all Jain youths in North America.
- **Seats are limited and will be offered on first come first served basis, so please register as soon as possible.**
- **IT IS COMPLETELY FREE. JAINA has made all this possible.**
- You must Pre-register directly at [25tattvas@gmail.com](mailto:25tattvas@gmail.com)
- JAINA's Academic Liaison Committee (ALC) will issue a certificate to all the attendees.



## ISJS Update

ISJS in India is now moving ahead to create a unique and perhaps the largest Jain studies institute in India. ISJS has already finalized detailed co-working agreements with Loyola Marymount University LA, Ghent University in Antwerp Belgium, Gujarat and Mangalayatan Universities in India to jointly execute education and research projects. The objective is to ultimately make ISJS a stand-alone accredited institute which can offer world class MA and PhD programs on its own. ISJS has now been able to attract a top-class scholar from Europe to head its operations and other reputed university professor to head its economics and relevance studies projects. More additions are likely in the near future.

Simultaneously, progress has been made to offer MA in Jainism and Advanced diploma in Prakrit language in July -September 21 time frame. Soon ISJS is going to move in its own space at Firodia Museum under construction some thirty miles away from Pune. A major seminar is also planned by ISJS in association with Indian Council of Philosophical Research, in July 2021 at its Naval Veerayatan Training cum meditation center near Pune on 'Relevance of Jain doctrine to today's worldly issues'. In November-December 2021 time frame- ISJS intends to organize a Jain Conclave of ISJS-ALC and reputed academicians to prepare a '**vision document for Jain academic studies in 2021-2031 timeframe globally**'.

So, in spite of the extreme problems inflicted by Covid epidemic, ISJS is moving ahead at brisk pace to become the premium center of Jain studies and research globally and support the activities of large number of Jain chairs and fellowships set up and being set up by Jains in North America.

## Recent Events

### New Academic Positions to be filled soon

Open positions at Willamette U/Claremont School of Theology and UCLA. Interviews are in progress and we expect these positions will be filled very soon.

### Symposium on Jain Consciousness and Science at Florida International University

A highly well attended very comprehensive 4-day symposium was held at FIU. This symposium was planned, organized and conducted by JERF and FIU.

### Shailendra Palvia Lecture at long Island University, NY

Dr. Christopher Jain Miller, Bhagwan Mallinath Professor in Jain Studies at Loyola Marymount University delivered the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dr. Shailendra Palvia endowed lecture on "Karma Theory and Veganism".

### How much funds have been invested by Jain Donors and the partnering Universities?

To establish Jain Academic Gyan Mandirs at more than 26 universities, Jain donors in USA, Belgium and in India have pledged /spent nearly \$17 million and the fun has just begun. We are not stopping here.

All this has been possible by the welcome match by the partnering universities. By agreeing to fund their salary and benefits of all the academic faculty appointees to all these positions forever and in perpetuity, it is estimated that the total matching funds by all the universities is at least \$40 million.



## Tribute to Dr. Surendra Singhvi

[Among the many Jains that migrated to USA and Canada during the sixties and seventies, Dr. Surendra Singhvi is one of the prominent personalities. He was closely associated with Acharya Sushil muniji and Gurudev Chitrabhanu and established Jain Centers in Cincinnati and St. Louis. He also has been heavily involved in providing Jain education at the University level. He has served in various JAINA committees. With this article Jain Digest recognizes his service to the Jain community of North America. Included in this article is a personal testimonial from Dr. Sulekh Jain, chairman of JAINA's Academic Liaison Committee.]

Dr. Surendra Singhvi came from Jodhpur Rajasthan to the USA in January 1962 and earned his MBA degree at Atlanta University. He joined Columbia Graduate Business School and received his PhD degree in Finance in 1967. While studying he established the first Jain Center in America. He also taught at the University of New Hampshire and then he moved to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and established a Jain Center of Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio in 1978. He moved to St. Louis in 1985 and established the Jain Center of St. Louis in 2003.



He organized the JAINA convention in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2003. Surendra is the Founder President and trustee at Cincinnati and has been a JAINA director for more than 26 years. He was JAINA treasurer and Chairman of Ahimsa celebration committee, JAINA education and library committee, and taught a course on Jainism and non-violence at the University of Dayton. He was a trustee appointed by Acharya Sushilmuniji at Siddhachalam and published English Pratikraman under the guidance of Gurudev Chitrabhanu. His family guru is Acharya Hastimuni and he is a life member of Veeraytan.

Surendra loves to read, write, travel and get involved in volunteer activities. He has been a Rotarian member for last 50 years and very active in Boy Scout organization. Surendra lives in Dayton, Ohio with his wife Sushila. They have two children Seema Jain and Sandeep Singhvi. They have 5 grandchildren. He likes to perform pranayama samayik and swadhyaya every day. Surendra suffered a stroke in 2002 and while recovering he published two books *Laughter is the Best Therapy* which is a compilation of 1000 jokes and *In Search of Happiness Peace and Success*.

### A personal note from Dr. Sulekh Jain

Always happy, cheerful, jovial, smiling, calm, visionary, thinker, author, leader, passionate about ahimsa and its practice, darling of parties, full of jokes (makes everyone laugh) and truly a Jain Sharavak, this is who Dr. Surendra Singhvi is.

I met Surendrabhai in 1984 when I moved to Cincinnati, OH. At that time he was the President of Jain Center of Cincinnati/Dayton which he had founded earlier and guided its activities. I visited with him and his family. I was welcomed with love and affection and it was a deep bond and friendship at the very first sight. I lived in Cincinnati for 15 years, and Surendar Bhai and I worked together on many Jain related programs.

Here is brief recap of some of the activities that we did together.

1. For several years, with his help, we organized off site summer camps on long weekends (in tents) for our Jain Sangh adults and youths. These were fun, sports, developing Jain identity and also sharing and teaching Jain values. These were very successful.
2. From 1987-89, Surendra Bhai worked as treasurer of JAINA.
3. In 1991, I as JAINA president requested Surendra bhai to chair the Ahimsa Divas celebration committee which he did for several years.

4. In early 1990s, thru his contacts with Prof. Judy Martin at University of Dayton OH, we (Surendra bhai, I and Dr Jwala Prasad of Cincinnati, OH) conducted full semester evening classes in **Intro to Jainism** for 20-25 students at University of Dayton. We did this for 2 or 3 years. Students liked these classes and discussions on Ahimsa and Jainism very much which they had not heard about before.
5. Also, in 1990s, we worked together to build the proper place of worship (Mandir) which must be nonsectarian. An eleven-acre land was acquired in a very ideal location and central to both Dayton and Cincinnati Jain communities. A very grand Pratishta ceremony was conducted in 1995 by Gurudev Chitrabhanu ji and Bhattarak Charukeerti ji and Samani ji. It was the leadership of Surendra bhai that we achieved this goal.
6. It is Surendra bhai, who in 2003 in spite of being in a wheelchair (due his ill health) motivated the local Jain Sangh and organized a very grand and very successful, JAINA convention in Cincinnati.
7. Surendra bhai never gives up and nothing can come in his way (ill health or not). In 2020, he contacted University of Dayton again (new Chair of the Dept) and re-established the contacts. It is due to his persistence that under a contract from University of Dayton, Dr. Subhash Jain of Iowa City, Iowa will be teaching classes every week as an adjunct Professor there from Sept 2021. Thank you Surendra Bhai.
8. Surendra Bhai has authored several books such as i) Book of 1000 Jokes, ii) In search of happiness, Peace and Success and probably a few more.

I have been so fortunate to have known him and work with him. I wish him a long and health life.

## Donor Profile: Harshad and Raksha Shah

By Dr. Nitin Shah, MD

Hailing from a small village of Gujarat, Mahudha, this couple who is a silent contributor, have helped change the landscape of Not Only Jain Temples but also Gyan Mandirs - Jain Academic Education! They have contributed over \$ 1 Million to Gyan Mandirs and another Million plus to Jain Center of Southern California (JCSC).



Harshadbhai and Rakshaben have been able to create a good fortune for themselves, their families and have helped greatly to advance Jain Studies in North America. They both are very simple and unassuming. Harshad & Raksha believe in both Laxmi & Sarasvati to be together!

Harshadbhai was born in 1946 grew up in Mahudha and arrived in USA in 1970. He came to pursue master's degree, but before completing he delved into chemicals business in 1978 and never looked back!

Rakshaben was also born in Mahudha and they knew each other while growing up. Harshadbhai married his childhood sweetheart in Fullerton, CA in 1973. They have twin daughters Roshni & Reshma and a son Rahul.

They were one of the first two families who pledged \$ 750,000 for the New Complex of JCSC in 2003 and continue to contribute to JCSC. It was 10 years later in 2013 when Dr. Jasvant Modi convinced them to start contributing to Jain Academic Education and has continued to do so since then!

They have participated in donating to University of California at Irvine, Loyola Marymount University, California State University of Long Beach, Cerritos Community College, University of Wisconsin at Madison, University of California at Santa Barbara, Emory University, University of Illinois etc. They have also donated to their village for high school & Santoshi Ma Temple, at Paitana, Sankheshwar etc.

They believe in a union of Laxmi & Sarasvati. As they kept progressing in the business, they did put Sarasvati into their children – Roshni is an Endocrinologist, Reshma is a Dentist and Rahul did PhD. in Enzymes.

# From “Earthlings” to Ahimsa, An American Journey to Jainism

by Kenneth Furr

(The original article was published at [www.veganjains.com](http://www.veganjains.com))



*Kenneth is from North Carolina and works for a wholesale company as an Inventory Control Coordinator. He tries his best day to day to live in the following question and takes it very seriously: “Spiritually speaking, what does it mean to be in right relationship with myself, with other humans, with nonhumans, and with the planet itself?”*

I was born in the state of North Carolina in the US. Every meal I had up until about four years ago had body parts, animal secretions or both in them. This is still seen as normal, especially in the south of the country.

You see, in the south, there is a whole culture, one where people proudly display stickers and license plates on their cars and trucks with pictures of happy pigs along with the word “barbeque”. There are billboards on the sides of roads advertising things like steak, cheeseburgers, chicken, tacos, fish, milkshakes... On and on it goes, billboard after billboard after billboard, all of them screaming out to us, “In the name of our profits and your desires, participate in this violence!”.

The same message over and over again one after the other. Not only do we have billboards screaming these messages at us, but, for some reason, the advertisers seem to think the more body parts and secretions they put between two slices of bread, the better these things they are advertising will be to those that consume them. In actuality, there is a culture of more (more violence/more harm) equals better, and many restaurants in the country are cashing in because of it.

## A little over four years ago I went vegan. Why?

I saw footage from a film called “Earthlings”. This film is not for the faint of heart, as it dives deep into the dark details, showing us what goes on in the hidden places that the meat industry, dairy industry, and fishing industry need to thrive. By the way, a little sidenote here about the dairy industry, something that is important to know: the

meat industry and dairy industry are tied together, not exactly two separate industries as many seem to think, they are pretty much one and the same.

More on that at:

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/cows/dairy-industry/>

Now, back to the film... What changed my heart, the thing that went deep into me, was seeing a cow in a slaughter chute on her way into the area of the slaughterhouse where they put a bolt through her skull. Can you imagine the fear she was experiencing, the trauma? I couldn’t help but think of the smells, the sounds, the things she saw, what was happening inside her mind and body because of all this.

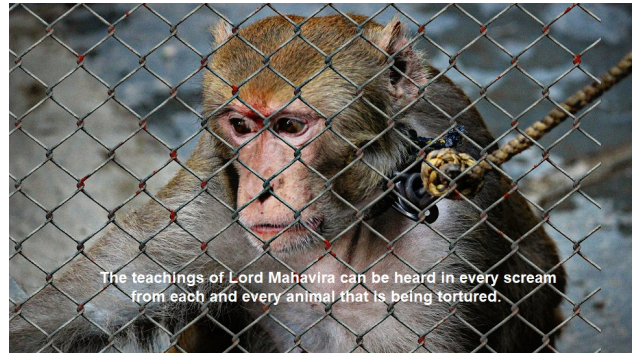
I didn’t know what to do with what I was deeply experiencing due to this, so I did the only thing I knew to do, I paced the floor. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. My whole body felt like it was quaking. That day I made the decision to never participate in any of these things again, and I never did. Fast forward to the year 2020. This is where Jainism enters the picture.

I had been a spiritual person in some sense of what that word means to people for the past 25 years or so. I experimented with many spiritual paths through those years, things like Christianity, Buddhism, Unitarian Universalist, even calling myself an Indie Spiritualist at one point. The thing that started bothering me most after becoming vegan was the lack of consistency I saw among people on these various paths. They would gather together and talk about things like love, compassion, mercy, peace, and empathy and then go eat chicken for lunch. It just didn’t seem to fit, not for me anyway,

not anymore. I started wondering if there even was a spiritual path that took non-harm (nonviolence) seriously. I started asking myself this one single question: "Spiritually speaking, what does it mean to be in right relationship with myself, with other humans, with nonhumans, and with the planet itself?"

**This, of course, after much research, lead me to Jainism, a path that I have fallen in love with, a more holistic and consistent spiritual path, from my perspective anyway. For this, I am incredibly thankful.**

*The teachings of Lord Mahavira can be heard in every scream from each and every animal that is being tortured in the name of meeting the various desires of human beings.* Listen closely to the cries of those being experimented on in laboratories, to those on trucks on their way to slaughterhouses, to those crowded together in cages, to those trembling in fear as they wait to enter the slaughterhouse, to those whose babies are being ripped away from them in the name of humans wanting cheese, yogurt, butter, and milkshakes.



The teachings of Lord Mahavira can be heard in every scream from each and every animal that is being tortured.

Image by Alexandra ♡ A life without animals is not worth living ♡ from Pixabay

Listen to all of them. Listen closely for Lord Mahavira's teachings. They are there. They are crystal clear. "Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life."

We are that in the flesh, those of us trying our best to follow the teachings. Let's be that. More and more every single day, let us become these words, not only for ourselves, but for every living being on the planet. Ahimsa. What a beautiful thing this is!

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## All Vegan Pista Barfi (ref: <http://www.jainvegans.org/recipes/>)

### Ingredients

- 100g of creamed coconut
- 150g coarsely ground pistachios
- 50g of golden syrup
- 1/4 of a teaspoon of vanilla essence
- 1/2 of a teaspoon of cardamom powder
- A cup of flaked almonds, whole pistachio nuts or pieces of dried fruit

### Instructions:

- Melt the creamed coconut by placing it in a bowl on top of a pan of hot water i.e., not in the water itself - I keep it in the plastic packaging
- Put the ground pistachios, golden syrup, vanilla essence and cardamom powder in a blender and blend
- Once the the creamed coconut has softened/melted, add it to the blender and quickly blend all the ingredients together - if you aren't quick, it will begin to solidify again



- Pour the mixture into a mold, lined with cling film - I used a plastic take away container
- Decorate the mixture with flaked almonds, whole pistachio nuts or pieces of dried fruit
- Leave it to cool for 10 - 20 minutes
- Place it in the fridge for 30 minutes
- Remove it from the fridge and use the cling film to lift the piece out of the container
- Take the piece off the cling film and cut to size.

## Ahimsa Meals and Fasting Committee Update

In the February 2021 issue of Jain Digest Dr. Chris Miller had written an article titled “Promoting Ahimsa on Thanksgiving Day 2021”. In that article he had outlined JAINA’s plan of fasting and serving meals to the needy on Thanksgiving Day. After discussions with various Jain Centers, the plan now has changed which has also prompted us to change the name of the JAINA committee to “Ahimsa Meals and Fasting Committee”.

The revised plan is as follows:

- 1) Serve 100,000 animal-free meals to those in need on Ahimsa Weekend, Oct 1-3, 2021 (and/or on Thanksgiving Day if possible).
- 2) Host a global Zoom webinar on Ahimsa Weekend to educate the American public about Thanksgiving history, purpose, animal cruelty, etc. with speeches by speakers from inside and outside of Jain community. We will also encourage people to sign-up to celebrate Thanksgiving in a non-violent way.
- 3) Commit at least 1,000 people to fast on Thanksgiving 2021, the 400th in US History.

Over the past 3 months, we have discussed this plan with many Jain Center representatives and other organizations such as “Luvin Arms” - an animal sanctuary in Colorado, “Joy of Sharing” in Los Angeles, “Shrimad Rajchandra Love and Care (SRLC)”, etc. Everyone likes the idea and has showed enthusiasm about being a part of this noble initiative to spread the message of non-violence in a compassionate way. We have received pledges for 20,000+ meals so far and feel that this is just the beginning!

To make it easier to participate in this program, we have published a Program Information Kit which was mailed out on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Latest information about this program can be found on the JAINA website at:

[https://www.jaina.org/page/Ahimsa\\_Meals\\_and\\_Fasting\\_Committee](https://www.jaina.org/page/Ahimsa_Meals_and_Fasting_Committee)

We are currently seeking support from all JAINA centers, temples, and other allied organizations to contribute toward reaching these goals so that we can spread the message of non-violence and non-violent diet leading up to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Animal-free diets cause [extraordinarily](#) less harm to [animals](#), the [environment](#), and [human health](#). Help us share this universal message.

Please make your center’s meals and fasting pledges here, to let JAINA know how many meals you can serve and how many can fast: [Link to form for submitting meals and fasting pledges](#)

If you have any questions or would like to contact our committee organizers, please email [christopher.miller@lmu.edu](mailto:christopher.miller@lmu.edu) or [dilipparekh@gmail.com](mailto:dilipparekh@gmail.com)

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Loyola Marymount University

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## JAINA Convention 2021 - New Programs Elevate Anticipation!

### *“Jainism: A Resilient Path to Peace”*

The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA) will be celebrating its 21<sup>st</sup> Convention on the Fourth of July weekend — from July 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. This year, the virtual event is planned to be a **global event** and is expected to attract an even larger audience from the USA, Canada, India, UK, Australia, UAE and many other countries. In face of all the turbulence throughout the world in the last year, it is paramount for us to be vigilant, compassionate, tolerant and to “keep the faith”. The Convention will showcase our firm belief that spirituality enables us to sustain our sense of self and purpose through beliefs, principles, values, and morals. Hence the theme for this year’s Convention is **“A Resilient Path to Peace”**.

With 250+ volunteers working to make this convention a success, Public Relations and Media Committee Chair **Mr. Vipul Shah** of Chicago is thrilled to announce the ongoing addition of new events, programs and speakers - significantly elevating the anticipation of the entire team for the Convention!

### Key Highlights

- Registration reached at **6250+** from 20+ countries
- Address by **His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama** now confirmed
- New Program for **Dayro / Bhakti** featuring top-notch artists on July 3rd, now added
- **Epic Dance Ballet** on the life of Mahavir Swami now added
- **Women’s Conference** on July 5th confirmed
- **55+** other Spiritual Speakers and Thought Leaders
- **130+ sessions** and 10+ programs spread from July 1st - July 6th
- High-caliber Hindi Drama with a well known cast **“Rang De Sanskar”**
- Flrst-time ever **Virtual Tirthdham Darshan** of 24 Tirths, using cutting-edge drone A/V technology

**A UNIQUE CONVENTION**



01

**First Virtual Convention**

State-of-the-art, user-friendly, and interactive virtual conference platform with many features



02

**Virtual Bhavya Tirthdham Darshan**

A virtual Tirth Yatra of 12 major Jain Tirths in India with custom produced darshan video of each Tirthdham



03

**First International JAINA Convention**

Virtually broadcasted across the globe, including the USA, Canada, India, UK, UAE, Australia, and more



04

**First International JAB Competition**

Teams across the world are invited to participate and compete in Jain Academic Bowl

**12**

**VIRTUAL ROOMS**



1 MAIN HALL  
1 EXHIBITION HALL  
6 BREAKOUT ROOMS  
4 COMPETITION ROOMS

**130+**

**SESSIONS**



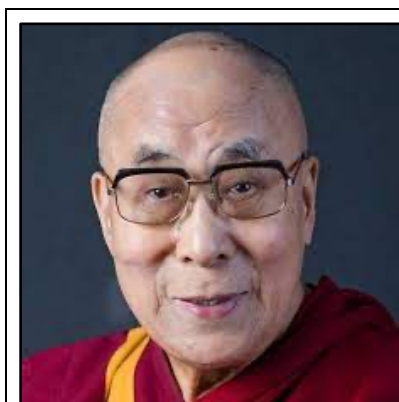
1 KEYNOTE ADDRESS  
5 FEATURED SPEAKERS  
55 TOTAL SPEAKERS  
~~  
35 BREAKOUT SESSIONS  
42 NEXTGEN SESSIONS  
40 ON-DEMAND SESSIONS

**10+**

**CULTURAL & RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS**



2-NIGHT CULTURAL PROGRAM  
SPECIAL BHAKTI PROGRAM  
INTERNATIONAL JAB  
BOLLYWOOD NIGHT  
JAIN DRAMA  
TIRTH DARSHAN  
DAILY AARTI & MANGAL DIVO



Address by **His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama** to the JAINA Convention 2021 attendees.





**Rang De Sanskar**  
*Thoda Logic with Bohot Comedy ka Magic*  
 Drama In Hindi

**DREAM TEAM**

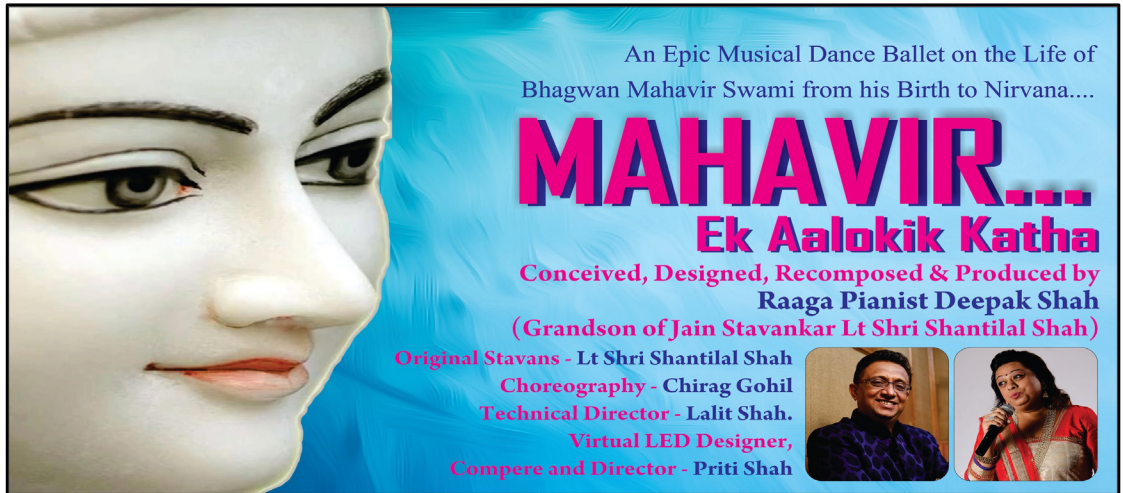
Theatre & Screen actors come together for Hilarious Meaningful Drama  
 Exclusively for JAINA First Time Ever  
 Created by RANGAT PRODUCTION (Mumbai-India)

*A high-caliber, humorous Hindi drama with a talented cast sure to resonate with a multi-generational global Jain audience*

*Celebrating JAINA's 40 Glorious Years*

**Sunehri Yaadein**  
 A BOLLYWOOD CONCERT

From a **GRAND STAGE** in India **Sunehri Yaadein** will take us down memory lane with 40 years of melodies to celebrate JAINA's 40th Anniversary!



*Epic Music Dance Ballet on the Life of Mahavir Swami*



*Dayro Bhakti Program with top-notch prolific singers*

JAINA convention 2021 is an invitation to all who aspire for a peaceful resilient recovery from the pandemic and to reweave the delicate fabric of humanity. **Come join us**, with our collective wisdom we will dream and create a nonviolent future of Love, Peace and Collaboration. And we will also have some good fun, the Jain way!

For more information about this convention and to register, please visit us online at: [www.jainaconvention.org](http://www.jainaconvention.org)

For Further Information, please contact: Mr. Vipul Shah, Chair of Public Relations and Press-Media Committee of JAINA Convention 2021 or its Co-Chair, Mr. Rahul Jain at [pr@jaina.org](mailto:pr@jaina.org)

# Reflections on Jay Shetty's Book "Think Like a Monk"

By Shruti Jain

(This article was originally published in the December 2020 issue of Young Minds magazine)



Hailing from sunny California, Shruti Jain is a recent college grad taking the first steps in her tech career as a Software Developer. Recent times have illuminated her curiosity to better understand the meaning of life, and she tries her best to inculcate this very thought as motivation in what she does. The arts have always fascinated her, and thanks to the pandemic, she has been able to dedicate some time to explore and create different mediums of artistic pieces — a result of her self-reflections.

Written by Jay Shetty, a personality known for his videos and podcasts on living a purposeful and spiritual life, "Think Like a Monk" scrambled up the charts — and I just wanted to see what the hype was all about.



Though most wouldn't guess from his outward appearance, Jay has spent time living a monastic life. Struggling to meet the status quo of an Indian household and fulfill the hopes and desires of his family, Jay was lost. One fortunate day, he reluctantly attended a talk featuring a monk by the name of Gauranga Das. He developed an instant curiosity that drove him to explore life at an ashram for the next four summers, and, later on, led him to make the life changing decision of leaving everything behind and becoming a Hindu monk. After three years of learning how to think like a monk, his guru told him that there would be greater value and service if he left the ashram and shared what he learned with the world. This book is one of the sublime results of this action, a shocking revelation for the modern world.

Jay Shetty creates an immersive experience through personal anecdotes, quotes from renowned entities, and academic research to give his readers a lens into the monk world. Most of us reading his book wouldn't take such drastic measures towards attaining peace and satisfaction. In the world we live in today, such a task is difficult to carry out — especially with our society's picture of a good person: one who deserves to go to Heaven, Nirvana or the Good Place. In the process of modernizing and making everything "easier" to understand, I believe that the basic fundamentals of living a prosperous life have gotten lost over the years. Jay does a remarkable job to help the layman understand and practice how to live a better life — one with meaning and purpose. He acknowledges time and again that taking the leap of faith is not something the common man would prioritize, but he makes the starting point of one's spiritual journey accessible. He says, "the greater your investment, the greater your return."

As I started reading "Think Like A Monk", I was in awe after seeing so many parallels to Jain philosophy and our core beliefs. In Jainism, the purest form of the soul exhibits total bliss, ultimately achieving a state of inner peace. It is precisely this inner peace that Jay writes about, guiding us through a meditative excursion with three checkpoints: **Let Go, Grow, and Give**. Let me be your tour guide as we walk through his guided trail.

## Starting Point: Let Go

For starters, you and I are pretty much strangers to one another, so let's introduce ourselves! Who are you? Who am I? Most of us get stumped right here. But what is our true identity? We are so used to describing ourselves using an external, temporary attribute that isn't really us. For example, "Hi, I'm Shruti Jain and I'm a Software Engineer" doesn't tell you who I really am. That is my job role, and further, it tells you nothing about my true self: my soul. Jay recalls through an anecdote: He [Gauranga Das] says, "Your identity is a mirror covered with dust. When you first look in the mirror, the truth of who you are and

INSPIRATION

what you value is obscured. Clearing it may not be pleasant, but only when that dust is gone can you see your true reflection.” It is our responsibility to remove these distractions that are fogging up the clarity of our true self.

Maybe we work together and figure out how to remove these distractions. How hard can it be, right? Well, there is a clutter of emotions — both positive and negative — that we deal with especially in today’s day and age. For example, a lot of these emotions stem from the instant gratification or lack thereof from social media, in turn causing harm to our mental and physical health. Throughout life, we ride a rollercoaster of emotions, and through its course we collect what we know as karma — good (punya) and bad (paap). These emotions impede our dharmic progress, detrimental to our spiritual growth in Jainism. How do I prevent this?

Jay shares a very practical approach to identifying, assessing, and acting upon the negativities in our life. To start off, **audit your negative thoughts**. Though it is near impossible to patrol our thoughts so as to make sure they are positive one hundred percent of the time, we must not undermine the importance of the following:

- challenging ourselves to identify the root of the negativity
- acknowledging whether it stems from within or the individuals around us
- acting upon it while being mindful of the mental space and energy we allow for it to absorb

Another practice Jay highlights is **Ksama**: Amending Anger — **Seeking Forgiveness and Forgiving**. Sound familiar? Michhami Dukkadam and Uttam Kshama are integral parts of our religious practice. Hey! Maybe we can refer to his exercise and write out forgiveness letters to individuals of all relations to us — new, old, and even those we aren’t close with anymore. He says, *“The pinnacle of forgiveness, true sattva, is to wish the person who caused you pain well”* (p.44). Oh, and friend, if I may call you that, don’t forget to forgive yourself too!

*Wait, Shruti. Sure, I can learn to forgive, but can I really forgive without knowing the root cause?* That’s fair, and lucky for us Jay left us with some insight. He describes the root as that which prevents life, not death — fear. What’s your biggest fear? Well, before you answer that, here’s a thought: THE CAUSE OF FEAR: ATTACHMENT. THE CURE OF FEAR: DETACHMENT. And if that sounds familiar, it’s because it’s reminiscent of one of our core beliefs in Jainism — Aparigraha, or non-possessiveness.

Attachments are some of the greatest sources of our pain. From here, it is just a lifelong practice of mentally changing our relationship with all the items on our list with the ultimate goal of detaching from them and learning how to enjoy and value what is in front of us.



Image by Valentin Sabau from Pixabay

All this talk about negative emotions and fears are sending shivers down my spine. Jay is definitely right to have us LET GO of the negativity! I think it’s time we take the reins to these emotions in our hands and navigate through the new opportunities that stem our way by uncovering the deeply rooted truths. We will use them to build a meaningful and happier life, ultimately realizing that true happiness is within; it is internal. We have to live life with intentions by having them permeate through our behavior. Be mindful! Wow only one-third of the way to our final destination! How are you holding up? Whenever you are ready, now that we have let go of so much baggage, it’s time to fill that void with some good stuff.

**Next Stop: Grow**

A concept to familiarize yourself with when you embark on the second stretch is that of the monkey mind vs. the monk mind. Think of it as the monkey mind is the child and the monk mind is the pragmatic adult. Jay refers to the conflict between the two to help us understand the impulses that drive our decisions and actions off track and how we expect the monk mind to direct us to pause and assess the bigger picture. It is our responsibility to nurture and train our monk mind to gain more self-control and become more aware of the different voices inside us.

Jay paints a vivid picture for us to better understand the influence of our 5 senses on our thoughts and actions depending on how present and developed our monk mind is. *“These senses are responsible for our desires and attachments and have the power to pull us in the direction of impulsivity, passion, and pleasure destabilizing the mind”* (p.152). He uses an analogy of

a charioteer (the intellect) and his horses (the senses). In the first scenario, the charioteer is untrained and asleep on the job, so the horses have complete control of the reins (the mind) and have freedom to lead the charioteer anywhere. The horses make their own judgements based off of whatever is around them, veering the chariot off the road *“in the direction of temporary pleasure and instant gratification”* (p.151). In the second scenario, the charioteer is trained, awake, aware, and attentive with the reins to the chariot in his hands, carefully steering along the correct route. The horses, in this case, are completely controlled by the charioteer’s command.



Image by John Hain from Pixabay

Do you think your monkey mind or monk mind overpowers the majority of the time? It’s okay, I need to learn to calm my monkey mind too! It takes identifying our dharma, establishing a routine, and taking control of our mind by destroying our egotistical mindset to cleanse our soul of its impurities. Dharma, in the context of this book, is defined as Passion + Expertise + Usefulness. Our dharma is within us already, it’s a matter of opening up our mind and curiosities to it. However, if we let our monkey mind thrive and take over, we make ourselves vulnerable to violence, close-mindedness, and greed. This is all a work in progress and can take a lifetime to achieve, but now that we are starting to dig deeper into our souls and how we can live a purposeful life, how do you feel?

**Final Destination: Give**

We have reached the last stretch of our little excursion! With all the enlightening insights and practices we have learned so far, it is very important to practice gratitude, or genuine appreciation for everything in our lives, regardless of our progress in our spiritual journey so far. *“Even if your life isn’t perfect, build your gratitude like a muscle. If you train it now, it will only strengthen”* (p.211).

There are so many ways to express gratitude, from simple words like “thank you” to taking part in a volunteer service to simply being kind to everyone, even strangers. Our lives are composed of the little events we experience, be it commuting to work, working on a class project, or going grocery shopping. The pleasure we receive from these events are dependent on the mutual kindness we give and receive to and from those around us. These acts of kindness go a long way in bringing forth the positive qualities in our life — compassion, resilience, confidence, and passion — and help us form meaningful relationships with ourselves as well as others.

Beyond gratitude, service is the most direct form of giving and it is one of the most satisfying acts for our soul. It not only helps others, but also helps us.



Image by PublicDomainPictures from Pixabay

*“When you’re living in service, you don’t have time to complain and criticize.*

*When you’re living in service, your fear goes away. When you’re living in service, you feel grateful.*

*Your material attachment diminishes”* (p.269).

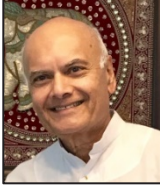
*“Service is the direct path to a meaningful life”* (p.269).

And with that we have reached the end of our tour through the guidance of Jay Shetty. Though many questions have been left unanswered, it is important to internalize the fact that these changes cannot happen overnight. Regardless, if you have made it till here and have enjoyed the content so far, I highly recommend you invest in this feel-good book as it has a lot of practical advice to offer through the flurry of examples and insights. This was just a surface level depiction of a handful of the many teachings you will encounter in this book! Good luck with your spiritual journey, my friend.

SPIRITUALIZATION

# Signs and Symptoms of Spiritual Awakening

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 include conducting Swadhyay on various Jain scriptures, reading and contemplating spiritual scriptures, listening to spiritual discourses and visiting religious ashrams in India for 3 to 4 months every year. [ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com](mailto:ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com)

Spirituality is the inner quality of self beyond physical and religious attributes. Spiritual awakening comes down to self-awareness and consciousness. It is a process of elevating consciousness to realize inner peace and happiness. It helps us move into the domain of enlightenment, the self-transcendence. A Spiritual Awakening is a call to higher consciousness and deeper mental awareness. The process of spiritual awakening brings about personal transformation.

If a person is on a path of spiritual awakening, we should expect or be able to realize the following signs and symptom:

## 1. Wrong beliefs are flushed out

Our beliefs conducive to ego, material life and self are overhauled to pave way for spiritual awakening. Our internal beliefs and attitude towards our daily routine has changed for the better. The focus is more on inner happiness. Now, the ups and down in social life or material life do not bother as much. Deep in our thoughts we tend to accept the external happening so that it does not disturb the inner peace and joy. We rise to the situation and derive happiness even in adverse conditions. The happiness comes from within with conviction that I am not the 'doer' of the outside scenario.

## 2. Desire to be of service to others arises

We feel more and more in harmony with nature and with all living beings. We realize that deep within, the innate nature of all beings is the same. The suffering of other living beings touches our hearts. The empathy and compassion for disadvantaged people and animals starts to flow from within. We become the flow of love. Eventually there will be no effort to be loving - it just comes naturally. True-self and love are inseparable. The loving nature from within helps being kind to others. Thinking good of others awakens love. We develop natural inclination to be

of service to others. Rather, it happily compels us to be of service to others. Our practice of selfless service cultivates love and compassion. We incline to stop those actions that don't resonate with our love, compassion or selfless service. It helps us practice gratitude.

## 3. We enjoy solitude and aloneness

We become more introverted to continuously draw the bliss and happiness from within. The relatives and other people around us do not impact as much anymore. We are on different wavelengths beyond their reach. Despite being introverted, they enjoy our company. Our presence enhances their happiness and pleasure. We remain connected with our 'true-self' during activities with others. Self-awareness does not get hampered.

## 4. We feel connected to the natural world

We become more aware of what is going on. We become aware of nature. We enjoy walking on the beach, watching the grandeur of ocean waves, choppy wind, and flying seagulls. We enjoy the creation and wonderful painting of cosmic consciousness. We are tuned in with it.

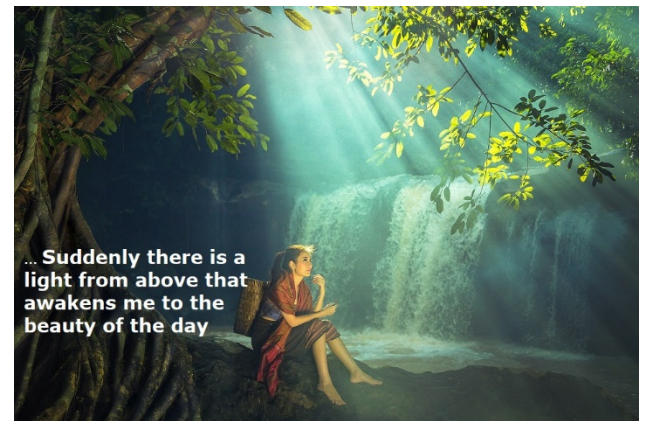


Image by Sasin Tipchai from Pixabay

We feel the flow of grace in everything we see in Nature. Our heart overflows with love and compassion. We feel and perceive the sense of

interconnectedness. It enriches our spiritual awakening and increases our empathy towards those who are suffering.

## 5. Judgemental attitude changes

We stop judging others and stop reacting to other's behavior. We love and accept others just the way they are. Instead, we judge ourselves through our reaction to events or individuals. Our reaction indicates the state of our mindset. This inner self judging thought process exposes our ego or any kind of prejudice or desired outcome expectation.

## 6. Self-reflection becomes normal routine

We periodically keep reflecting back to understand and improve our present moment awareness. Our focus is on our behavior, attitude, and belief process behind any action. We realize our shortcoming in responding to the situation. It allows us to see our faults and correct them with the right attitude to implement them in future events. We develop the habit of simply acknowledging those shortcomings. Our positive attitude of acceptance replaces those internal obstructive and hurtful memories.

We realize all the past events and individuals were simply instrumental cause and derivative to fruition of our own past karma. We stop blaming and criticizing others. We continually develop the attitude of a detached observer. Self-reflection slows us down in fast paced life and reduces the stress, anxiety and other signs of neurosis. It enhances our spiritual awakening process.



Image by RENE RAUSCHENBERGER from Pixabay

## 7. We meditate regularly

Meditation helps us to remain calm and quiet. We tend to visit more meditative places like beaches, mountains, national parks, and other quiet natural places that enhance our spiritual attitude. We try to keep one room in our home totally dedicated to meditation, introspection and contemplation. We even fine tune our friend circle and social relations to support our spiritual inclination.

## 8. We have a feeling of unity with all beings

We feel the oneness with all beings. The sense of separation is greatly reduced. Now, we are not afraid of any individual or circumstances. We stop differentiating others with gender, race, or nationality. Even death is not as relevant as it used to be. We know our true self is eternal and undecaying. We celebrate our life without any fear of death or future events. The goal has shifted from making the future better to being aware of the present moment. The equanimous present moment will bring all forthcoming moments blissful, peaceful, and joyous.

## 9. We become more peaceful

As a result of less reaction and more responses, we become peaceful. Our actions have an impact on peacefulness. Even our look, our words, internal desires, our vibrations - everything starts to contribute to inner peace. We feel as if nature is also appreciating our inner calm and peacefulness.

## Conclusion

Spiritual awakening requires us to engage in experiential practices. Many of us are blessed with strong cognitive ability, good health, access to sadguru, religious scriptures, and good flow of meritorious karma. We should strive to channel these resources for spiritual progress and accept the material life as supporting our spiritual goal.

We realize that there are numerous ways to develop our inner and outer personality. Our spirituality instinct removes our orthodox dogma of limited ability. We realize we are capable of achieving more in the spiritual domain and that the abundance and richness in external life follows as a shadow of inner spirituality.

# Why Yoga Is Good for Your Body and Brain, According to Science

By Jaylissa Zheng and Dacher Keltner

(This article originally appeared on [Greater Good](#), the online magazine of the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley.)



**Jaylissa Zheng** is a student at UC Berkeley, a yoga teacher ([JlissYoga.com](#)), and (as of the Fall 2020) a Ph.D. student, where she hopes to integrate yoga into her clinical practice.



**Dacher Keltner, Ph.D.**, is the founding director of the Greater Good Science Center and a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *"The Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence"* and *"Born to Be Good"*, and a co-editor of *"The Compassionate Instinct"*.

## **New research suggests that yoga directly influences our nervous systems, making us happier and healthier.**

When I (Dacher Keltner) was 18, I wandered into a yoga class in my first year of college, hosted on a basketball court in the school's gym. At the time, some 40 years ago, yoga had mystical, somewhat cult-like connotations. While a handful of students waited on mats, the teacher arrived dressed in white clothes, looking like Jesus. After playing a song on a wooden flute, and reading a few Haiku poems, he led the class through a series of yoga postures. Yoga, just getting off the ground in the West, would prove to be a salve for my anxious tendencies.



Yoga may very well be one of our oldest happiness practices. Archeologists have discovered figurines in India that date from 5,000 years ago that represent what appear to be people in yoga postures. More certain is that yoga emerged some 2,500 years ago in Indus-Sarasvati civilization in Northern India as part of Hinduism.

Many in the West are familiar with one vein of yoga practices: the asanas, a Sanskrit that translates to "postures." The full tradition is much broader, and

encompasses pranayama (mindful breathing), meditations, chanting, sutras (yoga philosophy by the sage Patanjali), kriya (internal cleansing movements), and ethical principles related to kindness, selflessness, non-materialism, and nonviolence. Over its history, yoga has evolved into many forms, from Tai Chi and Qi Gong to hot yoga and core power yoga.

Today in the US, more than 36 million people practice yoga on a regular basis. They likely practice one of a couple kinds of yoga that derive from Vedic yoga and involve 12 basic postures, with names like plow, fish, cobra, locust, and bow pose. In addition to these metaphorical descriptions that add significance to the body's movements, this kind of yoga also involves the teaching of deep breathing patterns and a focus on being present and mindful.

Does this practice work? Indeed, in the past decade, an emerging science of yoga has been uncovering the significant health and happiness benefits of this ancient practice. And it suggests that we should all think about hitting the mat more often.

### **The health benefits of yoga**

Yoga is a practice of the mind and body, and it brings about health and happiness benefits through its direct influence on our nervous system.

Central to yoga is bringing awareness to our breath, also known as the "ujjayi pranayama," the breath of fire. Deep breathing, like the kind cultivated in yoga, activates the vagus nerve, the large branch of nerves that begins at the top of the spinal cord and stimulates activation in the vocal apparatus, muscles that move



the head and eyes, heart, respiration, digestive organs, and gut. Elevated vagal tone is good for a host of bodily functions, like digestion and immune function.

Some forms of slow yoga breathing involve contracting the glottis muscles in the throat, which improves the heart's capacity to efficiently regulate blood pressure, and there's some evidence that practicing yoga can reduce blood pressure.

In a recent study, 29 participants were randomly assigned to a four-month training program of either stretching or yoga respiratory exercises (ujjayi breath). During that time, the yoga group improved their inspiratory and expiratory pressures, the low/high-frequency ratio of heart rate variability, and heart rate variability itself—all markers of better cardiovascular and respiratory function. Simply stretching didn't have the same effects.

**PRACTICE YOGA**

Jaylissa Zheng has created GGSC-tailored yoga videos, free of charge, that combine mindful body movements with science-backed meditations, available at [JlissYoga.com](http://JlissYoga.com)

In another recent study from a team at UC San Diego, 38 people who participated in a three-month yoga retreat showed a decrease in inflammatory processes, an immune response related to high blood pressure, diabetes, and autoimmune disease.

Given these shifts in the cardiovascular and nervous systems, it makes sense that yoga is good for our health. A regular practice can help loosen the muscles and connective tissues around the joints, which in turn can reduce aches and pains. In one recent [study](#), 75 rheumatoid arthritis patients were randomly assigned to an eight-week yoga program or a waitlist. Rheumatoid arthritis, a painful condition that involves tender, swollen joints, is estimated to affect 54 million Americans each year and cost the health care system \$19 billion. The patients who practiced yoga saw significant improvements in their experiences of physical pain, general health, vitality, and mental health, and these reductions in pain lasted nine months after the study ended.

According to other studies, practicing yoga can help reduce people's stress, anxiety, and depression — perhaps better than traditional medication if you practice daily for over a month. Yoga has also been found to be an effective way to help people overcome addictions. In light of these findings, it's not surprising

that regular practitioners of yoga report being happier.

**How yoga makes us happy?**

How does yoga make us happier? It might be related to its effects on heart rate variability and the vagus nerve, according to a review of 59 studies with a total of nearly 2,400 participants. People with higher heart rate variability and vagus nerve activity tend to be kinder and more compassionate, qualities that make for a happier life.

Yoga also shifts our brain chemistry. In one study, Chantal Villemure and colleagues from the National Institutes of Health used magnetic resonance imaging to examine gray matter in the brain, which naturally declines with age. They found that yoga practitioners had less grey matter decline in regions of the cortex involved in the experience of positive states such as joy and happiness.

Finally, yoga has been found to increase activity in the anterior cingulate cortex and the medial prefrontal cortex, brain areas that are associated with empathy, gratitude, and kindness. In other words, practicing yoga may help us experience more positive emotions and be more oriented toward others, both of which can create lasting happiness over time.

Eight years ago, I (Jaylissa Zheng) moved to New York. It was a move that left me suffering from many of the struggles that are rampant today: anxiety, sleeplessness, poor appetite, and a sense of despair. Medication did little, if anything, for my suffering. So, I turned to yoga; I became a yoga teacher. And in performing and teaching this ancient happiness practice, I have found an embodied source of ever-richer resilience. Perhaps you, too, can find new meaning in one of the human race's oldest happiness practices.

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## Pathshala Teacher Monica Shah - A Role Model for Younger Kids

By Nishi Shah and Suryaraj Jain

(This article is taken from <https://youngminds.yja.org/from-teaching-pathshala-to-being-a-role-model-for-younger-kids-monica-shah-42f50379670f>)



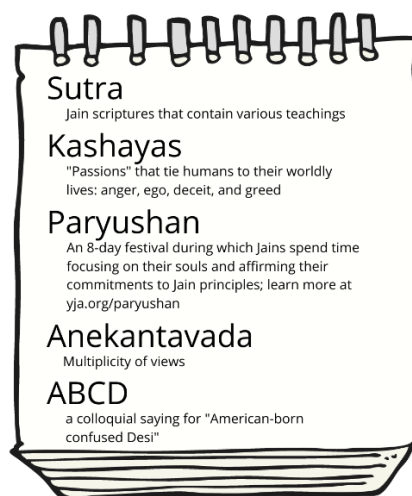
Monica Shah isn't just an ordinary Board of Trustee member for YJA. She's a Pathshala teacher, basketball coach, music lover, Bharatnatyam dancer, and so much more. But her biggest passion in life is leading her own children to be positive contributors in society. That's how she became interested in being the coach for her son's basketball team, choreographing Bharatnatyam pieces for her daughter, and teaching Jainism to the younger generation.

For the past ten years, Monica Aunty has been teaching Pathshala at the Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington (JSMW). Motivated by her son, who was then just two years old, she kick-started a Pathshala class for nursery school students to start providing him and other children with a foundation of Jain principles early on

As the American-born daughter of Indian immigrants who first came to this country in the early 70s, Monica Aunty considers herself to be a true "ABCD." She reflects on her own upbringing in the 80s when

"[Indians] weren't as mainstream as we are today." This made it imperative for her to integrate Indian values into her own life, and a close, supportive extended family has enabled her to bring those values into her children's lives as well. Growing up, "being vegetarian was foreign" to the people around her, so attending Jain Pathshala in her community was one way of relating to others. Monica Aunty's childhood involvement in the Jain community shaped much of her life, and she wants to pass that positive Pathshala experience on to younger generations. So alongside training her children in Indian arts such as Bharatnatyam, tabla, and harmonium, Monica Aunty most strongly values instilling Jainism through attending Pathshala.

Being a first-generation Indian-American graduate from the University of Michigan with two children born in the U.S., she finds it easy to relate to current students in her Pathshala classes, many of whose parents have immigrated to the U.S. in more recent years. When working with these students, she tries to instill upon them that, "no matter how well-versed you are on a *sutra* (prayer), how much time you've spent practicing, how much you've studied, it's such a complex philosophy, science, [and] religion that it's important not to get hung up on 'you're Jain if you do this' or don't do this." Instead, Monica Aunty emphasizes being Jain by your intentions — your thoughts, words, and actions.



With this approach, she has noticed a change in attitude for many of her students, even those who seem less involved. Monica Aunty is particularly proud

of one such activity. In a weekly activity log, her students record whether they exercised a *Kashaya* (passion) in their day-to-day lives without meaning to, or if they fulfilled a Jain vow they wanted to. For example, one of her students explained how they experienced frustration while playing basketball with their much-taller sister, but they eventually were glad that their sister had the height advantage because it made them a better player in the end.

Stories like this from her students are what continuously drive Monica Aunty to be able to make a difference in their lives. She says her main goal is for each of her students to walk away as “a better person, even if [they’re] not memorizing every little thing.”

Monica Aunty tries to use this mindset in her daily life as well. As a proud patriot, she is honored to be a civil servant for the United States and currently works as a cybersecurity engineer for the Department of Defense. Being part of such an extraordinary government department, she often takes classes that “talk about [the] diversity of views [and] taking care of yourself to take care of the team,” a practice reflective of the Jain tenet of *Anekantavada*. At home, she helps take care of her most important team, her family. In a collective effort, they try to live a green lifestyle; over the years she has become much more aware of her consumption of materialistic things, as well as animal byproducts.



On top of that, she tries to emphasize “being conscious of your emotions,” at home with her family. Monica Aunty states that this has been especially important over the past year, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Events like *Paryushan*, which often have a social aspect along with the spiritual, were suddenly observed virtually, which gave her a lot of time to reflect on the past and present. Given all of that, Monica Aunty and her family have spent much more time together, especially outdoors, hiking and exercising. The extra time she has had with her family led her to reflect upon herself as well, which has led to the mantra: “I need to focus on me.”

In addition to choreographing dance and coaching basketball, Monica Aunty enjoys “a pretty eclectic taste in music,” which ranges from house music, and old school hip hop, to classical tabla, garba music, and reggae. One of her favorite artists is the Fugees. She also enjoys watching basketball; originally a Detroit Pistons fan during their “Bad Boys” era, she now roots for her home team, the Washington Wizards.



At the end of the day, nothing matches the level of her passion for teaching Pathshala to the next generation of Jains. She sees the Jain community as an extended family, who all share a common trait regardless of how different they are in other forms, and she feels fortunate to be a part of YJA once more — first as a member, then as a board member, and now as a trustee — because it gives her the opportunity to watch each new generation of YJA take the organization further in creative and energetic ways.

When asked if she had any advice for young Jains, Monica Aunty simply stated, “the older I’ve gotten, the more I’ve come to appreciate that [community].” She goes on to explain how YJA can be a helpful organization for the youth, stating, “when you’re in YJA, you’re in a peak time of your early adulthood, and it’s [an] amazing organization to establish those friendships and to make those new connections. It may not seem like a big deal now ... but it is a big deal, and it’s so wonderful to have that.”

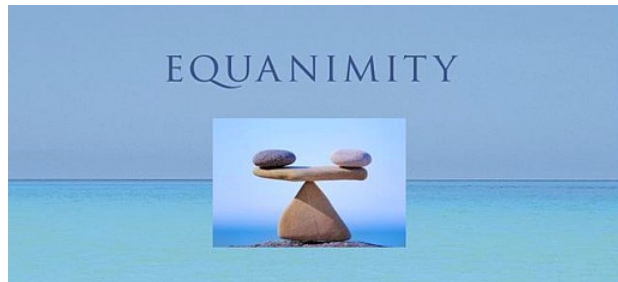
## Equanimity - A Tool to Achieve World Peace

By Riya Shah



Riya Shah is currently a senior studying Biomedical Sciences at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, FL. Born and raised in the suburbs of Detroit, MI, she credits the Jain Society of Greater Detroit and her Pathshala teachers for their teachings and efforts. Riya has served as the President for the Jain Organization of Youth (JOY) and is currently a Local Representative for YJA. Riya will be graduating this spring and attending medical school in the fall.

( Link to Riya's TEDx talk on this topic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISSRWgqUpe4> )



Imagine a war-torn world with disagreements rising between different religions and groups, and every person with a very unstable and wavering mind that resorts to violence. How would this world be? It would be a completely different world that we would be living in. The most effective way to rid the world of these harsh circumstances and hostility is through the process of equanimity. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines equanimity as, “evenness of mind especially under stress” and also “right disposition; balance”. I’ve always been fascinated by the thought of equanimity and the ability to maintain and sustain a stable mind. Equanimity can help me in my day-to-day life because it helps reduce stress and negativity. In Jainism, equanimity is an essential quality of the soul, for achieving Moksha.

### The Concept of Equanimity in Jainism

Equanimity comes from the Latin word *aequus*, meaning even, and *animus*, meaning mind. It is the central essence of the soul. This state cannot be forced upon anyone. As Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung once said, “Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better take things as they come along with patience and equanimity.” In my personal opinion, this quote shows the true nature of the world. It conveys the message that there is no such thing as a “perfectly happy life”, as sadness is always a balancing factor. This shows that equanimity always prevails over emotions. I agree with this because equanimity is a very renowned concept and can be used in every situation.

In Jainism, there are many references to equanimity, including the 12 Bhavanas. One of the four auxiliary Bhavanas is Madhyasta Bhavana which states that we should look upon all situations with equanimity and tolerance.

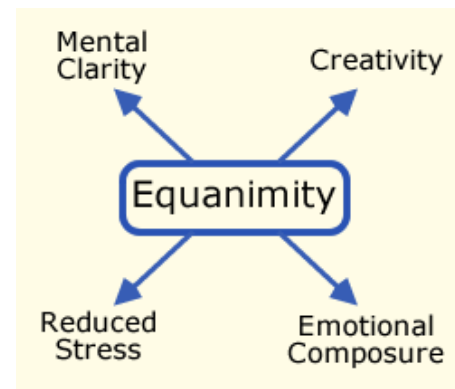
### The Value of Equanimity in Jainism

Equanimity is vital in achieving liberation and breaking the cycle of birth and death. Anyone who maintains this condition throughout will definitely reach Moksha. Moksha is a place where everyone retains equanimity and I value it because it is a very peaceful and serene place.

Equanimity gives us control over our emotions and helps us to become more aware of our surroundings. We can maintain a relaxed state over pain and pleasure, which corresponds to Vedaniya Karma. This helps us in conquering over one of the eight karmas and can also lead into overcoming more.

A person practicing equanimity realizes that the world is filled with pain & suffering as well as moments of happiness & beauty. This understanding of momentariness provides stability of mind.

The Acharang Sutra states that earnest individuals express religion as a form of equanimity. In Jainism, practice of equanimity is true religion.



By maintaining equanimity, as seen from the figure above, it can lead to mental clarity, creativity, reduced stress, and emotional composure. This can benefit numerous people including individuals, friends and family, and society.

### The Power of Equanimity (Jain Story)

There was a kingdom called Magadh, whose ruler was King Shrenik. His wife, Queen Chelna, was a devoted follower of Jainism. The king wanted to prove to Queen Chelna that Jain monks were superficial and could not practice self-restraint to such an extent. Once, while Shrenik was taking a stroll, he saw a Jain monk named Yamadhar, who was deep in meditation. Shrenik put a dead snake around the neck of the monk and went back home. Smugly, the king told the story to the queen who felt sorry for the monk and took Shrenik to the monk's meditation place. Because of the dead snake, ants and other insects were crawling around the monk. The queen gently removed all of the insects. After some time, the monk opened his eyes and blessed both of them. This extent of the monk's equanimity amazed King Shrenik and he became an ardent follower of Jainism.

From this story, we can see the effect that maintaining equanimity can have on oneself. Monk Yamadhar was engaged in equanimity and took everything that was thrown at him, coolly and calmly. He even did not differentiate between the person who had caused him the harm and the person who saved him. This depicts the influence of equanimity.

### Achieving Equanimity

Once, there was a farmer who had just one horse with which he did all of his work. One day, that horse ran away. All the townspeople commented, "How unfortunate! That's so terrible for you." The farmer responded, "Maybe yes, maybe no." The next day, the horse returned with six other horses by its side. The townspeople said, "Wow! Now you have six new horses." The farmer said, "Maybe yes, maybe no".

From above, we can see that in times of happiness and sadness, the farmer did not let his emotions get the better of him. The farmer maintained equanimity throughout all of his situations. However, most of us are like the townspeople, always fluctuating between happiness and sadness. Instead, we should remain constant and not fluctuate too much between our emotions.

In Jainism, one of the biggest aims is to eradicate all karmas and attain Nirvana. When one has

equanimity, many karmic particles are eliminated. By practicing meditation and Samayik one can achieve equanimity and as a result can get rid of Raag and Dvesh.

Equanimity means "Samayik" in Sanskrit. During the state of Samayik, one is devoid from all worldly desires, passions, and focuses only on the soul. By doing this, one achieves peace of mind. Samayik is one of the six daily essentials of laypeople. We must focus on the true nature of ourselves and of our souls to conquer our passions and desires.



By just observing a fast or donating a lot of money, one cannot achieve Nirvana if they do not maintain a state of equanimity. The goal of donating money should be a genuine desire to help others and being very modest and humble about it. When observing a fast one should not feel smug every time one is congratulated; one should preserve a state of equanimity and remain indifferent.

### Equanimity in Other Religions

Equanimity is a worldwide concept which is practiced in other religions, too. In Hinduism, the Bhagvad Gita preaches that anyone can achieve equanimity through religious activities and worship of the lord that eventually leads to the self-realization. In Buddhism, equanimity is one of the four immeasurables. The Buddha says that a mind packed with equanimity is "abundant, exalted, and immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will." In Christianity, equanimity is necessary to fulfill theological merits of gentleness, temperance, and charity. In Islam, the Qur'an speaks of acceptance and tolerance.

Thus, one can see, in all world religions, equanimity plays a very important role to fulfill and uphold many religious actions. The chart below summarizes all of the different aspects of equanimity in world religions.

Jainism	Hinduism	Buddhism	Christianity	Islam
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Equanimity is achieved through pure meditation called Samayik.</li> <li>•One who sustains their equanimity will attain liberation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Equanimity is attained through religious activities</li> <li>•Leads to self-realization</li> <li>•“Perform all actions with mind concentrated on renouncing attachment. Spirituality implies equanimity.”- Bhagvad Gita</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•One of the four immeasurables (uppekha)</li> <li>•Mind should have a stable position</li> <li>•Stepping stone to enlightenment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Necessary to fulfill many religious actions</li> <li>•Main tool to achieve goals</li> <li>•Three words for equanimity: <i>Nepesis, ataraxia, and apathia.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Acceptance and tolerance for everyone</li> <li>•Islam means "peace that comes with surrender"</li> <li>•A Muslim is "one who has become equanimous".</li> </ul>

### Equanimity and World Peace

World peace is a notion that everyone in the world can live together in harmony. It is the idea that everyone shares this one planet, and we should try to make this world an enhanced and more tranquil place to live for all. Equanimity is the stepping-stone to this vast goal. Without equanimity, world peace isn't even plausible. If everyone sustains equanimity, the world will have a calm and balanced mind in which to negotiate with. Also, with equanimity, crime and violence levels will go down all over the world.

However, it is very challenging to uphold a strong level of equanimity without getting distracted. World peace is a huge concept that may never happen, but with equanimity, we can get closer than ever before. If everyone was able to keep a state of equanimity, our world would be filled with many more peaceful and stable minded people.

### Equanimity Today

In today's ever-changing world, technology plays a big role. Apple has created an app called "Equanimity-Meditation Time and Tracker." This app records meditation time and tracks how often one meditates. This shows that even if our world is changing, we are still trying to incorporate technology into various concepts and our lifestyle.

Moreover, there is also a magazine called 'Equanimity'. This magazine shares tips on how to be calm and collected and how to balance one's lifestyle. This shows that equanimity is a concept that most people are interested in achieving.

In addition, many undergraduate college students have been reported practicing equanimity so that they can calm themselves before stressful exams and essays. By doing this, it has shown substantial growth in their performance and capacity.



### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say that equanimity is a significant concept that is acquired through immense focus and meditation. It is a theory that is used alongside many religions, not only Jainism. Because of this, world peace can be achieved through equanimity. Equanimity is starting to get more and more recognized in the modern world as a pathway to people and tolerance.

## Sanskar, A Matching Game - Combining Jain Concepts and Family Fun

By Dr. Bansari Shah



*Bansari Shah is a previous JCYC president and alumna from Southern California. She is a practicing Emergency Medicine Physician and recently became a mother.*

As a frontline worker in the emergency department during Covid, this past year has been full of challenges and unknowns. March of 2020 was the first of many months spent in hotels and Airbnb's. In addition to meditation, I found some reprieve in creating art. Then, this past September I was asked to create a piece of art for an art auction. I wanted to make something modern with a traditional touch. From this concept, I created a collection of geometric images of Jain symbols. Each of these images was digitally created.

After seeing my work, a friend suggested they would look great up in a children's room. This suggestion kept ruminating in my mind. In addition to being artwork for walls, there had to be a way to make it more meaningful for children. Soon after, an idea popped into my head, why not make a matching game?

It could serve as an early introduction to Jainism as well as open the door to stories and conversations of general concepts. To create the game, I needed 18 concepts to make into images. This would allow for a 36-card game set up. I worked with my dad and we went through a few Jain art books until we decided on 18 potential images. We chose a variety of symbols, story images, and Tirthankars to introduce thoughtful concepts to young children.



Over the next several months, I created each of the images in the geometric fashion to match the original art. Unlike the traditional memory game where the matching pair of cards are exactly the same, I decided to have one card be just the image and the other to

have the corresponding image and title, which would facilitate learning and conversation for those playing the game.

The last piece was giving the game a name. Sanskar (meaning values) seemed to be simple, straightforward, and fitting. The game is one that introduces Jain roots and values to your children - the ones you are supposed to be receiving from your parents at the very beginning.



For now, the game has been shared with family and friends. It is a true joy, especially after experiencing the pandemic as an ER physician, to watch grandparents play with their grandchildren. One child went through each of the cards, reading the titles and explaining the ones she knew to her younger brother. She attends the local pathshala and it was wonderful to see the next generation apply their knowledge when playing the game.

For more information about Sanskar or similar Jain artwork, please email [BSversatiles@gmail.com](mailto:BSversatiles@gmail.com) or DM @BSVersatiles on Instagram

## Practicing Jain Principles – Experiences Shared by Community Members

During March/April 2021 we had asked our community members to share their experiences of peace, joy, fulfillment; as well as challenges they have faced in practicing Jain principles. We thank all those who submitted their entries. The Jain Digest editorial team reviewed all the entries carefully. A few selected entries are included in this article. Many of the entries have been edited due to size limitations without losing the main message the writers wanted to convey. Please note that the experiences and opinions expressed in these writings do not necessarily express the opinions of the editorial team or any JAINA official. We sincerely appreciate the efforts our members have taken to share their thoughts.

*My hotel partner started buffalo wings restaurant business and asked me to invest since he thought it was a lucrative business. However, me and my wife rejected this proposal because we did not want to be a partner in a non-vegetarian business. Later, we found out that all investors had lost a lot of money. We were happy that we followed Jain principle of nonviolence and avoided financial problems as well.*

*Once I was working as a management consultant for a small steel company and based on my recommendation, they decided to buy a large steel company. The CFO advised me not to buy stocks because I was an insider, and the SEC will sue me for making a profit. I controlled my greed and decided not to buy stocks. As soon as the news was released the stock doubled; but I was not investigated by the SEC. Other insiders who bought stock and made a lot of money, went to prison. Again, following Jain principles helped me reduce my passions and kept me out of trouble.*

- **Surendra Singhvi, Dayton, OH, USA**

*Jain way of living is quite near to natural way of living. Take example of dietary practices in Jainism. This is what nature tells us to practice. We can overcome many diseases by following Jain dietary principles. Problem comes when we follow them as rituals and not as part of our habits where there is no element of compulsion.*

*Similarly, seeking forgiveness is another novel practice to be followed. However, when we look into this during Paryushan Parv, it appears more to be a showmanship rather than from one's heart. Darshan is a matter of self-practice rather than a work of exhibitionism*

- **Pratap Sanchetee, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India**

*Reading and understanding Jain Bhavnas deeply when I was 18 years old changed the direction of my life and made me a better person. Now 15 years later, Jainism is still a big part of my life; from reciting the Navkar Mantra to learning to do Samayika. Without the English translated Jain educational materials this would not have been possible.*

*I learned that living as a true Jain comes from within and no one else besides myself can put the work into it. Sometimes I made difficult decisions to continue living by Jain principles even when it was in contrast with what was going on around me. I also feel so grateful for the knowledge I have gained. Jain philosophy, prayers, and values have always been the guiding light during difficult times. When I am feeling lost, the core practices of "right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct" give me a purpose and help me back on a positive path. When I'm alone, remembering the "Panch Parmesthis," saying "Chattari Mangalam Sutra" and reflecting on the meaning gives me a feeling of peace. When everything is going well, Jain values help to stay grounded. I hope I can always remember these for the rest of my life too.*

- **Anonymous, Philadelphia, PA, USA**

*In order to practice non-violence in day-to-day life, me & my family have adapted the vegan lifestyle. We also try to respect nature/ environment by reducing/ recycling/reusing things being used in day-to-day life. We use hybrid cars to reduce pollution.*

*By practicing "Live & Let Live" really helps us to pursue a "Guilt free" lifestyle & also helps us to be kind & compassionate towards every living being!!!*

- **Anonymous, RSM, CA, USA**



*I was very firm during my pre-wedding days (16years ago) that I want to get married to a Jainism practicing household, where they do not force me to eat or cook root vegetables, where I can do Jin puja every day, and my husband would accompany me to temple every day. It took my Dad 2 years to find a family and a boy like that in Chennai.*

*Because Jainism is purely an art of living, I don't want to compromise on it. I did my double M.A. in Jainology from Ladnun and from University of Madras. I thoroughly know what Jainism is and how enriched my life is because of following it. During my studies, I learned about Karma theory and understood how we can reduce our karmas if we have knowledge of how to do right purusharth. I always feel exceptionally blessed to be born in a Jain family that induced Jain values in me, that taught me Chaityavandan, Guru Vandan, Samayik, Pratikraman, Navsmanan, with meaning. I have an unwavering faith in Bhagwan Parshwanath.*

*I am proud that currently my father Dr. A Parasmal Vaid, Chennai is building the largest Jain temple in Panchasar near Shankheshwar Tirth under the holy blessings and guidance of rashtriya sangh Acharya Sri Padmasagar Suriji maharaj.*

*When I was young, my Dad taught us "Marganisari ke 35 Bol". Today I proudly say that my business uses the tagline "Nyay Sampan Vaibhav". Every penny we have earned is by honest means. There can be no one as happy and blessed as I am, to be born as a Jain and to be living as a JAIN.*

- **Sunitha Gulecha, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India**

*Jain way of living is quite near to natural way of living. Take example of dietary practices in Jainism. This is what nature tells us to practice. We can overcome many diseases by following Jain dietary principles. Problem comes when we follow them as rituals and not as part of our habits where there is no element of compulsion.*

*Similarly, seeking forgiveness is another novel practice to be followed. However, when we look into this during Paryushan Parv, it appears more to be a showmanship rather than from one's heart. Darshan is a matter of self-practice rather than a work of exhibitionism*

- **Pratap Sanchetee, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India**

*A long time back when I was a small child, my aunt made a pledge in her Sthanak to do 1 crore (10 million) samayik. After making this pledge, she began to get worried. After all, 1 crore is a very large number - how could she possibly do this? She then went to the Maharajsab at the Sthanak and explained her situation. The Maharajsab offered her an equivalent alternative to the 1 crore samayik. He told her that if she makes a vow to not get angry with anyone for the next six months then it will be equivalent to the laabh of 1 crore samayik and she agreed happily to it.*

*After I heard this, I became inspired - 1 crore samayik would take lifetimes to do. If giving up anger for six months was as good of an action as this, then it must be a great choice to make. If my aunt could do this, then why not me? I also challenged myself to follow this for the next six months and followed it honestly. It had a very positive impact on me and I decided to make avoiding anger part of my life forever. This small lesson I learned from the Maharajsab helped to make me a better person and showed me the importance of having control over your negative emotions.*

- **Manisha Bhandari, Northville, MI, USA**

*I am following and living life by practicing Jain principles for many years. It has helped me to manage emotions, resolving conflicts and be open minded. It has also helped me managing anger, pride and ego. Following Jain diet has helped me stay healthy. I have become non-possessive since I started following Jain way of life.*

*I was practicing in U.K. for many years. When I had to move down to Ahmedabad along with my brother to take care of my mother, I did not face any difficulties to establish myself, even though it was a new location for me. Jain way of life made that transition easy. After I moved back to U.K. and practiced for another 11 years, I retired from practice realizing that there is no end to earning money. My family was supportive of my decision. Since then, I am spending my wealth and time for good cause and performing volunteer activities.*

*Overall, by following Jain way of life, I am living healthy life without any stress*

- **Dr. Mahendra Mehta, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, UK**

I feel fortunate to have been born in a Jain family with such a rich tradition and great values. I still remember vividly a story from my childhood, once I was playing on the road in my ancestral village with a few of my friends. My friends and I must have been around 11 or 12 years of age, playing with sticks on the road we came across a turtle. The kids immediately started to bother the poor turtle with their sticks. I moved the turtle to the side and told the other kids to please not bother the poor thing as it was minding its own business. I can only think of attributing this act of kindness at this young age to my Jain upbringing.

-Rajendra Kumar Jain, Piscataway, NJ, USA

Following Jain postulates has always been an astonishing experience for me, particularly in daily life. Following a Jain lifestyle has furnished several benefits in my everyday lifestyle:

1. **The health benefit** - Due to following a Jain diet, almost all of my meals are principally vegetables, lentils, wheat, and beans. Because of such a high intake of vegetables, I'm more resilient, and faster than others when playing sports, or just walking from one place to another. This establishes the fact that the vegetarian diet is the most wholesome diet, and provides you with all of the vitamins, supplements, nutrients, and liquids for your body to always function at its prime.
2. **The spiritual benefit** - Because I do samayik every week, and frequently visit the Jain Society of Greater Detroit, my mental health always remains great.

In my experience, Jain values and principles are extremely beneficial for physical and mental health.

-Keval Shah, Farmington Hills, MI, USA

A common misconception is that Aparigraha is limited to non-possessiveness. But understanding it to be so much more - as non-attachment - can change one's entire perspective. Nowadays, referencing the past and expecting the future is such a large source of our suffering. So many of our conversations on what we could have done if not for the virus, or what we miss from the world before Covid - are based in attachment, and result in suffering. The solution is Aparigraha.

Aparigraha is a detachment from any expectation of the past or future, and therefore remaining calm in the present. The solution is understanding that life in each moment is a celebration and a joy. And yet, we should always know that everything is temporary and always changing.

My life was completely changed by the pandemic. I was flying twice a week for work, going to any city I wanted to on weekends, exploring different corners of the world. Everything changed in March of 2020 - I went from taking 130 flights a year to 0 the year after. Part of me can remain stuck in attachment (Parigraha), constantly thinking about how I miss the good old days, how I wish things were different, how I miss seeing everyone. But practicing Aparigraha means becoming aware of those attached thoughts and feelings, realizing that all of those past experiences were beautiful - and knowing that life moves on through different chapters. And instead, calmly replacing those experiences in new ways (through online events, through different types of adventures, etc).

The key to practicing Aparigraha is to realize that the present moment is all you have. If you really think about it there will never be a time when your life isn't "this very moment". You should then know that the voice in your head - which 90-100% of the time is thinking about the past or the future (how things could have turned out or how they may turn out) - is not really who you are. Being engrossed in what you're doing in the present rarely requires thought - you just do it without thinking (e.g. driving a car, hiking a trail). And so, who you are is who is aware of being aware. If you embody that, as all the Tirthankars preached to do and have done, then you'll be able to focus on the present and calmly problem-solve any issue you may be facing. And you will let go of any attachment to how things play out in the world. You will be attuned to reality as it is.

Everyone faces discomfort and loss in life - the pandemic showed us that. But your suffering is a choice, a choice that you have the power to stop. Become aware of your 'attached' thoughts and then practice Aparigraha. Let go of your expectations and attachments of how you wish your current reality could have been, or of how things were in the past, and instead fully appreciate them for having happened. For every single day for the rest of our lives, we will be tested on whether we practice Aparigraha. So as the Tirthankars have done, so can you.

- Chintav Shah, Somerset, NJ, USA

*In December of 2017, my husband and I almost died. In my heart, I believe that we were saved “only by the grace of God”. While vacationing in Mumbai, we were dining at a rooftop restaurant in Kamala Mills when the lounge caught on fire. The events surrounding the fire are horrific, so horrific that even now, almost 3.5 years later, it is difficult to process those 30 seconds between when the fire started, and we were able to escape. Some days, I forget – but then I look at my body, with the scars of 2nd and 3rd degree burns still visible and I realize that I will never forget because I have permanent reminders.*

*Just one day earlier, my mom had accompanied all four of us – my husband, two young boys and me – to Shankheshwar for a day long pilgrimage. There, in the most sacred of Jain places, I had prayed to Padmavati with the deepest of prayers. For months leading up to the trip to India, I had not been feeling well. Countless doctors and many tests later, all of them concluded that nothing was wrong with me physically. But emotionally, something was not right – a deep sense of dread had filled me for many months, almost a premonition. So, I stood silently in front of Padmavati and I asked for only one thing – my health. I asked the goddess to please keep me safe and healthy; not for myself but so that I could take care of my two young boys.*

*As we left Shankheshwar that day, I heard the voice of the Maharaj Saheb in my head – he had told me that God only gives us as much as we can handle – no more, no less.*

*I know that Padmavati saved us that night in 2017. She kept me safe so that I could continue mothering my two boys. My karma led me to that restaurant that fateful night – but my karma also saved me at the same time. My Jain belief that deeds in my past life have shaped this life was proven so true. It has taken much time, but I am at peace with this phase of my life. What happened could have been that much worse; but Padmavati most definitely heard my prayer in keeping me from more harm that night. Without the firm teachings of Jainism, I would not have been able to face this challenging time in my life.*

- Kosha Udani, Morris Plains, NJ, USA

*When I went to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for an assignment, I met a Janitor named Mohammad at work, who had experienced lots of hardship in life, left his studies to take care of his father’s health and worked in extreme weather condition but still was full of energy with a smile in his face and a positive attitude.*

*Once during work, he become quite weak and fainted and I took him to home and provided him a healthy vegetarian food. He told that he did not get good food for months and was just eating raw meat, uncooked vegetables. After staying at my place and by eating healthy food, he recovered in a week. He told me that he wanted to work hard so that his son and family have not to live a life like him.*

*I never met Mohammad later and don’t know his whereabouts and how he was doing but I often wonder how I was influenced by this man’s situation and what within me motivated to help. Upon deeper introspection, I realized that I was in a rat race of life chasing dreams, materialistic possessions etc. but this experience showed me that compassion to help a stranger with no expectations in return brings a lot more fulfillment and joy for which I credit that my upbringing in a Jain household.*

-Saurabh Parikh, Bayside, NY, USA

## बस एक परदा

- हिमांशु गांधी



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

प्रणाम प्रभु.  
जिंदगी क्या है?

बस एक परदा  
बाकी सारी कल्पना है  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (१)

हटा नश्वर शरीरों से  
जो एक परदा  
तो संसार में माटी का ढेर ही पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (२)

हटा सारी उपलब्धियों से  
जो एक परदा  
तो संसार में कर्ता न कोई पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (३)

हटा सारे रिश्ते नातों से  
जो एक परदा  
तो संसार में अपना न कोई पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (४)

हटा सारी क्षणभंगुर खुशीओं से  
जो एक परदा  
तो संसार में सुखी न कोई पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (५)

हटा सर्वत्र भासीत विकारों से  
जो एक परदा  
तो लोकालोक में विकार न कोई पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (६)

हटा सर्व पर पदार्थों से  
जो एक परदा

तो सारे न कभीभी मेरे थे, न हैं, न कदापि होंगे ऐसा  
पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (७)

हटा देहादी संयोगों से  
जो एक परदा  
तो लोक में अपने को एकाकी एक ही पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (८)

हटा दृढ़ आरोपित मिथ्यात्व से  
जो एक परदा  
तो प्रतेक जिव में परम गुणों से लदा प्रभुत्व ही पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (९)

हटा अणगणित विकल्पों से  
जो एक परदा  
तो निर्विकल्प मुक्त स्वभाव ही पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (१०)

हटा अपरंपार मोह से  
जो एक परदा  
तो निर्मोही शुद्ध स्वरूप ही पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (११)

हटा कल्पनाओं के जंगी पहाड़ों से  
जो एक परदा  
तो शाश्वत निज यथार्थ सुख शांति वैभव ही पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (१२)

हटा अनादि की अज्ञानता से  
जो एक परदा  
तो सर्वज्ञता से लदा निर्बाध ज्ञान समुद्र ही पाया  
जिंदगी क्या है? ..... (१३)

# Culture Never Forgets – It Adapts

By Professor Atul K. Shah



*Professor Atul K. Shah from UK is founder of the global Young Jains movement and founding editor of Jain Spirit. He can be contacted at: [diverseethics@gmail.com](mailto:diverseethics@gmail.com)*

*In this article he shares a new project on “Protecting Jain Migration Memories”, which was launched during the Pandemic.*

I bet you have your own personal story of migration – the fears, excitement, opportunities, challenges, the successes and failures. Above all are the memories – those which weave your story and make it real, reminding you of the threads of your past, which influence you in the present.

One of the oldest living cultures of the world, the Jains, from whom Mahatma Gandhi learnt his philosophy of Ahimsa (non-violence) have also been a migrant community, within India and outside India, as a legacy of the British Empire.

I am a Jain, and was raised in Mombasa, Kenya, and now live in the UK. Through my active involvement with the community at various levels, and my research and scholarship, I have come to understand the huge cultural and entrepreneurial capital that this community has nurtured over millennia. A group of us have launched a project to capture the ‘oral history’ of migration, where commerce and professionalism feature heavily, and so does wisdom, self-discipline, servant leadership, and the spirit of assimilation with different cultures.

‘Oral history’ is a very well respected and scientific way of capturing history through personal stories and memories. It is also very entertaining and helpful in recording a culture and capturing its essence through real experiences of people of all ages and sexes. It is particularly helpful when a community is in a minority, and experiencing discrimination and cultural abuse, either through ignorance, or through active marginalisation, which can be worse for women, elderly and the disabled. Through this project we hope to inform, share, educate and protect. You too could do the same for your community.

We have created an introductory video ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZAACwhohNo> ) to explain this project and started to record the memories of migrants as they travel, work, adapt and assimilate. In the process, we are unravelling a very positive story of kindness, friendly trade, exceptional trust and community building, and significant cultural and social impact wherever the community has travelled and settled. In terms of business, this impact is on the employees, customers, suppliers, and wider stakeholders, including a light footprint on the environment. Decisions are taken with careful thought and reflection, and there is a long-term attitude to sustainable growth, rather than a short-term desire to profit and run. We have done a detailed research study of the business philosophy and ethics in my book titled *Jainism and Ethical Finance*.

<http://www.diverseethics.com/atul-blog/ethical-finance-a-jain-perspective>

For young people, having access to history and narratives, especially so dear and close to their own family experiences, has the potential to breathe new life into the value of Jain culture, and its capacity for giving us skills in self-discipline, culture, inter-dependence and self-esteem and self-confidence. A Jain is often a very good and respected leader, whatever profession or enterprise they choose to engage in. In a time when there is a rise in racism in the Western world, and increasing conflicts about culture and identity, migration stories have the power to give us a good understanding of our own history. This is a positive and pro-active way of protecting our identity in a confusing world. At the same time, the sacrifices made by our parents and forefathers can give us an added respect for their vision and determination to give us a good future. We can understand the role of community, culture, and resilience in giving us lasting success through these true stories.

As an example, we did a conversation event about the life and legacy of the late Kusumben Shah MBE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CjQJ6j-ual> who was a major pioneer on the teaching of Gujarati language and Jain wisdom to young children, who have now become professional adults. They found this experience of ‘Saturday school’ so empowering and creative, and made so many good friends in the process, that they feel that Kusumben was a very rare teacher and pioneer, who lived her culture before she preached it.



We had wanted to write a biography on her life, and one of her former students, Dr Priyanka Shah has now taken on this challenge, which itself demonstrates how young people can get engaged in protecting our heritage and giving it new life and vision.

In time, we hope to build an archive of these true stories to inform the global community about different ways to live in harmony with one another, and at the same time protect our own culture and educate future generations about its science and resilience. In North America, the same approach can be adopted, and the stories and memories collected on audio or video, and some of these can be shared at JAINA conventions to give young people an opportunity to discuss these legacies. Such an approach also helps us diversify Jainism from a past to a living present, where our own stories and experiences are as relevant as past literature and narratives. When we take Jainism outside India, we are making history every day through our actions. We are building bridges of hope and peace through our student life, our work life and in our neighbourhood communities.



*The community built their own nursery and primary and high schools to educate their children*

Please do contact me at [diverseethics@gmail.com](mailto:diverseethics@gmail.com) if you would like to help this project in any way. In particular, we are looking for interviewers and seed funding to develop a professional infrastructure to share these stories widely. Cultural investment is the most sustainable investment we can make.

## Are you interested in writing for the October 2021 Jain Digest?

After we announced that we are looking for more writers, a few of you responded and three new writers sent us articles that we have published in this February issue of Jan Digest.

We are encouraged by the interest our readers have shown and we would like to continue to see more people from the community to join us in making Jain Digest a wonderful learning experience for all of us!

Now that you have seen the diverse content of this magazine, is the writer, thinker in you motivated?

- ✦ Have you come across a person or an organization that is providing compassionate selfless service to others?
- ✦ Do you know a Stavan that wells up your eyes? Do you want to share it with others?
- ✦ Would you like to explain an aspect of Jain philosophy that challenges and engages you?
- ✦ Have you heard any inspirational stories that motivate you to do your best?
- ✦ Do you want to share your challenges and experiences in practicing Jain principles?
- ✦ Are there special things happening in your Jain Center or Pathshala you want to share?

If your answer is “YES” to any of the above questions, then don’t wait !

You can write on varied topics such as Compassion, Devotion, Jain Education, Inspiration, Transformation, or any other topics related to Jain principles. We will provide you with guidelines and any assistance you may need.

For more information, contact us at [jaindigestpublication@gmail.com](mailto:jaindigestpublication@gmail.com) or send a Text or WhatsApp message to 310-721-5947 We would love to hear from you!

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