

JainDigest

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A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America



STATUE OF PEACE

Celebrating 150th
Birth Anniversary
of Acharya Vijay Vallabh
Surishwer Ji Maharaj

JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the
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On the Cover:

On the occasion of his 150th Birth Anniversary, a 151" tall statue composed of 8 materials and entitled "**Statue of Peace**" of **Acharya Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Ji Maharaj** was virtually unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji at Vijay Vallabh Sadhana Kendra, Jetpur, Rajasthan, India, on November 16, 2020.

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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Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

On behalf of Jain Digest Editorial Staff, I wish you a very Happy New Year! May the year 2021 bring you good health, peace and prosperity.

Thanks to all those who complimented us for the October 2020 issue of Jain Digest which contained comprehensive coverage of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Prakash Mody from Toronto wrote to his friends, *"Please read this COVID19 special issue. This is the contribution of JAINISM to the WORLD. Jains and Others will learn how much Jainism is scientific and complete!"* Thanks, Prakashbhai! We also thank all those who participated in telling us about their experience in facing the various challenges of the Pandemic.

In November, we also published a 140 page Special Edition of Jain Digest dedicated to Jain Education in Universities and the Pathshalas in Jain Centers in North America. We are humbled by the wonderful, heart-warming comments we have received, including one from Professor Atul K. Shah from UK. Prof. Shah has spent many years publishing the renowned **Jain Spirit** magazine. He wrote to his friends and colleagues *"Hot of the press, I attach the latest issue of this excellent magazine...It is packed with information on a huge revolution happening in front of our very eyes, led by the Jain diaspora, but also excellently supported by Jain scholars and academics who are transforming the landscape of non-violent education. It reflects a RENAISSANCE in Jain Education globally."* He also gave us detailed feedback appreciating our efforts. Thanks, Atulbhai, your support and encouragement means a lot to us.

The goal of this special edition was to inform you all about the remarkable progress our community has made in promoting Jain Education in the academia and to let you know about many dedicated professors that are doing research and teaching Jainism to the students in the Western society. You can view or download the PDF at https://www.jaina.org/mpage/Jain_Education_in_North_America

With the February 2021 issue, we go back to our format of grouping the articles in various sections such as Compassion, Devotion, etc. In this issue, we have added a new section titled "**Community Corner**". Late last year we had asked you to tell us about your favorite Jain temple. Your responses are depicted in this section.

In addition, we bring you 18 articles on varied topics that we feel all of you will find inspiring and educational. I am happy to let you know that 8 new authors have contributed to the magazine in this issue by writing specially for Jain Digest – Dr. Chris Miller, Shrenik Shah, Noopur Jain, Mrs. Mohini Jain, Dr. Reshma Shah, Dhairysha Shah, Mannan Mehta and one author who wanted to stay anonymous. Other authors whose articles have been published elsewhere have graciously allowed us to include their articles are: Dr. Parveen Jain, Nipun Mehta, Dr. Robert Puff and Rishi Zaveri. My thanks also to those who contribute regularly – Dr. Nitin Shah, Dr. Sulekh Jain, Anop Vora, Ramesh Khandhar and Reena Shah for their articles. Thanks also to Srikumar Menon for allowing us to use the content from www.nirgranth.in

My sincere thanks to our editorial team for their efforts in approaching some of the new authors, searching for new content and working on putting together your responses about the favorite Jain Temple. Thanks to Jayanaben Shah for creating a new look for the magazine and designing the cover page. I am also pleased to inform you that Dr. Parveen Jain from San Jose, CA has joined our editorial team as an advisor. We look forward to his valuable contribution to our efforts.

Hope you enjoy reading all articles in this issue. We would like to encourage all of you to send us your comments about the articles in this magazine. And write to us if you would like to join our editorial team or write an article for our next issue which will be published in June 2021.

You can write to us at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

Stay safe. Stay healthy.

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Jai Jinendra!

Hope you had a great start to the year 2021. On behalf of the JAINA Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, I wish you and your family a very Happy and a Peaceful Year ahead and pray for everyone's well-being. With your support, we hope to continue imbibing and spreading the Jain way of life by various means to the Jains of North America and the world.

On behalf of the JAINA Convention Committee 2021, I invite you to the first-ever virtual & global Convention of JAINA which will be held from July 1-6, 2021. Please register at:

<https://www.jainaconvention.org>

Here are glimpses of achievements and on-going projects from October 2020 to January 2021.

October 2020



The JAINA Education Committee announced a unique opportunity of weekly virtual **Workshop Sessions for Children in North America** to learn about Jain fundamentals and their practical application in day to day life. This workshop is designed for youth in response to the requests received by the JAINA Education Committee.

November 2020

JAINA Academic Liaison Committee and the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside organized the first Annual Jain Academic Convention, '**Jain Studies in North**

America and Community Funding: Present and Future' on November 7th. A special edition of Jain Digest devoted to Jain Education in North America was launched during the convention.



On November 28th JAINA Academic Liaison Committee organized a very informative presentation by **Dr. Abhay Firodia** from Pune, India about a mammoth state-of-the-art museum of Jain philosophy, history, architecture, and culture near Pune. He also talked about their plans to promote Jain studies through ISJS.

The **Sadharmik Bhakti Fund** committee under the leadership of Dr Jayesh Shah launched an initiative to raise funds to help sadharmik families in India, who are experiencing dire financial conditions made worse by COVID-19.



On November 7th and November 21st, JAINA hosted an inspirational play about **Sheth Jagdusha** to raise funds for the Sadharmik Fund.

With an overwhelming response from the community, \$630,000 was raised; well exceeding the goal of \$500,000. JAINA has collaborated with several credible and reputable non-profit organizations in India to distribute these funds effectively.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The JAINA leadership team has made certain initiatives to support our members and their present life values. Initiative for **Jain Seniors** aims to create an environment for Jain Seniors to help them live with dignity, security, spirituality, health services, and other challenges

JAINA created a new **Thanksgiving Meals and Fasting Committee** chaired by Dr. Chris Miller, Assistant Professor of Jainism at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. The goal is to celebrate 2021 Thanksgiving in a non-violent way by serving vegetarian meals to 100,000 needy people and have 1,000 people fast.

Around Diwali 2020, **JAINA Women's committee** celebrated through a virtual session of 'Festival Sweets - Delicious Vegan and Gluten-Free Cooking'. The Atlanta and Washington DC women's chapters together hosted a zoom session.

December 2020

JAINA held its second **Board of Directors Meeting** of the year 2020 virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the meeting,

- Each committee gave a presentation on their recent activities and plans.
- Had an important discussion on hosting a virtual Convention in 2021, how JAINA can help Jain Center Directors and possible activities to be carried out to unite the community of North America.

JAINA EC created a new **Vaiyavach Committee** under the chairmanship of Dr. Jasvant Modi from California to fulfill our duty towards Sadhu Bhagwants.



Initially, the committee aimed to raise \$500,000 by Dec 31, 2020, to build new Vihardhams, provide Vihardham Sewa, and Medical help in India. With the amazing community support, we have been blessed to have received pledges totaling \$662,000 as of January 28, 2021.



JAINA presented live Pravachan by **Acharya Ratnasundersuriji Maharaj Saheb** on 'Our Beloved Jain Shasan' in Hindi. The session had an inspiring discourse on ways and means of providing Seva to our Sadhu/Sadhvis. We are still raising funds for this huge project of building new Vihardhams. This is JAINA's first initiative to fulfill our duty towards our Sadhus and Sadhvis. Please come forward and donate to Vaiyavach Sewa generously.

On December 27th, JAINA presented the **3rd Educational Talk on COVID-19** by Dr. Nirav Shah focusing on vaccines. The talk was attended by more than 100 people.

Due to the Pandemic, **JAINA Calendar** shipment was delayed. Our sincere apologies for the delay in this respect. Hope the JAINA Calendar 2021 has been received by those who had provided their latest mailing address.

JAINA, JCGB & JITO present **Survey of Jains** to provide us with data to help our community leaders strengthen Jainism and the Jain Way of Life. This survey is for Jains of all ages and backgrounds to share their beliefs, practices, and views. Topics include Jain demographics, spiritual practices, attitude towards current trends, and your views on the future of our religion. Please take this survey and share it with your Jain friends and family.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

January 2021

The **21st Biennial JAINA Convention** Registration opened on January 8, 2021.



If you have not registered yet for the first-ever global online JAINA Convention, please register for JAINA Convention 2021 at just \$5.

The 2021 JAINA Convention team is excited to host Jains not only from North America but from across the globe at the 21st Biennial JAINA Convention Program.

For sponsorship opportunities contact conventionfundraising@jaina.org.

JAINA Women's Committee organized a new webinar on 'Ayurvedic Tips for Healthy Living' for all. The speaker was a well-known Ayurvedic medicine practitioner Dr. Vaijayanti Apte. She is from Dallas, TX and practicing Ayurvedic medicine for last 40 years.

Upcoming Events



JAINA invites you to watch **Inspirational Play in Hindi "Narvir - Saga of our Solemn Duty" on Valentine's Day – February 14th.**

It is a story of a previous life of King Kumarpal. The play will be broadcasted live on TV Asia, JAINA website & other social media platforms.

Major Youth Updates

YJA Youth Swadhyay Group (ages 18-29 only)



We are excited to introduce the YJA Swadhyay Group, an advanced Jainism class for college students and working professionals ages 18-29 who want to deepen their understanding of Jainism. This group will meet with a select teacher or Jain scholar to delve into various concepts in Jainism and learn about ways to apply those concepts to one's day-to-day life. Fill out this form if you would like to receive email updates about this youth group!

<http://bit.ly/yja-swadhyay-interest>

YJP

2021 YJP Executive Board Elections: Applications for the 2021 Executive Board and Co-Chair position are now open.

Thank you for your continued support to make JAINA better each day.

With Peace, Love, and Happiness,

Mahesh Wadher

Promoting Ahimsa on Thanksgiving Day 2021

By Dr. Christopher Patrick Miller



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

As we are all well aware, millions of Americans once again feasted on the bodies of nearly 50 million slaughtered turkeys and millions of other animals and their secretions last year on Thanksgiving. Though I am already vegan, I chose to fast that day, in what was for me at the time a silent protest of the unnecessary violence and racist, colonial settler roots of this national holiday as well as the speciesist, anthropocentric ideology undergirding the factory farming system more generally. Deep inside, I silently wished that I could fast with others, to share the experience with a similarly motivated collective that also understood the multiple layers of violence of the Thanksgiving holiday.



Turkey Factory Farm

On Thanksgiving 2020, I had a zoom call with Dr. Sulekh Jain. I disclosed that I had been fasting after he said "Happy Thanksgiving" to me. A few days later in an unrelated zoom webinar, Dr. Jain publicly announced to a global audience that I had done so. I had not intended for this to be public news, though I was happy when the global Jain community responded to his announcement with great enthusiasm by sending me private and public

messages in the webinar chat indicating their desire to organize a community fast for Thanksgiving 2021. My silent wish was coming true.

In the days that followed, I received several emails from members of JAINA's executive committee and was nominated to chair a committee for a global fast and an animal-free meal service for those in need on Thanksgiving 2021. JAINA's President Mahesh Wadher named this committee the "Thanksgiving Meals and Fasting Committee" and along with other members of the executive committee proposed that we commit 1,000 people to fast.

In addition, the committee also simultaneously proposed that the global Jain community serve 100,000 animal-free meals to those without food on Thanksgiving 2021. I am honored to accept the nomination to chair this all-too-important committee and cause, which demonstrates the Jain community's ongoing commitment to propagate non-violence as well as its proactive approach to charity.

To be perfectly honest, as a Filipino-European-American who grew up in America, I was raised with a dietary ethos that tended to foster an ideology of human dominion over nature, animals, and all of god's creation. Turkey was a staple part of every Thanksgiving meal, as was pig. On a regular basis, our family ate meat 2-3 times per day, drank milk at almost every meal, and never questioned where our Sunday morning bacon, egg, and cheese omelets came from. Nevertheless, all of this changed when I was 21 years old when my worldview and concomitant dietary habits were exposed for the first time. A student at Loyola Marymount University, I enrolled in Dr. Christopher Chapple's "Religions of India" upper division undergraduate course where I was introduced to the Jain ideas of *ahimsā* (non-violence) and the notion that humans are not necessarily the only beings possessing consciousness and a soul (*jīva*). In fact, as we learned, everything from humans down to the smallest microorganism has a transmigrating, embodied soul which, furthermore, does not wish to experience pain.

“The function of souls is to help one another.”

Tattvartha Sutra, 5.21

Following my graduation from LMU, my first supervisor at KPMG, Mira Shah, happened to be a Jain who exemplified these teachings in her daily life. Merely seeing her commitment to a vegetarian diet at our lunch breaks inspired me to try vegetarianism for the first time. Never trying to convert me, Mira shared with me many of the intricacies of vegetarianism including how to be aware of foods that appear to be vegetarian but are actually not (such as the eggplant tofu dish that was soaked in chicken stock at Panda Express!). Mira’s impact on my dietary habits should not be overlooked and demonstrate the important impact that every Jain can have on reducing unnecessary violence. Fast forward 15 years later, and I became vegan under the significant influence of UK-based Jain Vegans’ annual “Give up Dairy” campaign during Paryushan.

The Jain tradition is indeed famous for its impressive commitment to non-violence, which has manifested in myriad forms since Mahāvīra celebrated his epiphany while meditating with his eyes **open**:

“...Mahavira meditated (persevering) in some posture, without the smallest motion; he meditated in mental concentration on (the things) above, below, beside, free from desires... Thoroughly knowing the earth-bodies and water-bodies and fire-bodies and wind-bodies, the lichens, seeds, and sprouts, [Mahavira] comprehended that they are, if narrowly inspected, imbued with life, and avoided to injure them...”

(Jacobi 1884: 80-81, 87).”

Though Jains are known for their abstention from violence based on Mahāvīra’s insight here, the lay community is also quite *proactive* when it comes to reducing the violence around them. Indeed today, Jain commitments to non-violence toward all living beings are visible both on and off the dinner plate. As many Jains today like to say, “Jainism is not just a kitchen religion,” meaning that the practice of non-violence shows up in other domains of life. And now

it will show up on 100,000 animal-free Thanksgiving meal plates for those in need.

It is in the spirit articulated in this article that I would like for us to begin to envision a **Global 2021 Thanksgiving fast and a meal service for those in need**. For those of us for whom food is plentiful throughout the rest of the year, we can give thanks by *not* eating on Thanksgiving 2021. If you do not want to fast, eat a vegan Thanksgiving dinner. If you know a turkey-eater, consider encouraging them to prepare a vegetarian meal. And no matter what we decide to eat, we must also do what we can to provide healthy, animal-free meals to those for whom food is habitually scarce.

When we collectively accomplish these tasks, we will more confidently say to one another, “**Happy Thanksgiving**”.



The Thanksgiving Meals and Fasting Committee therefore requests the support of Jain Centers and individuals nationwide (and even worldwide) to make the Thanksgiving 2021 meals and fasting effort a success. It is our hope to share the Jain value of non-violence with the nation and the world, to show that there is a positive alternative to a turkey dinner, and that an animal-free meal is a realistic and more humane choice on Thanksgiving Day.

Please contact me at christopher.miller@lmu.edu if you would like to contribute to this important initiative.

“First knowledge of the world, then compassion for it.”

Dasavaikalika, 4.10

COMPLASSION

Compassion During the Pandemic

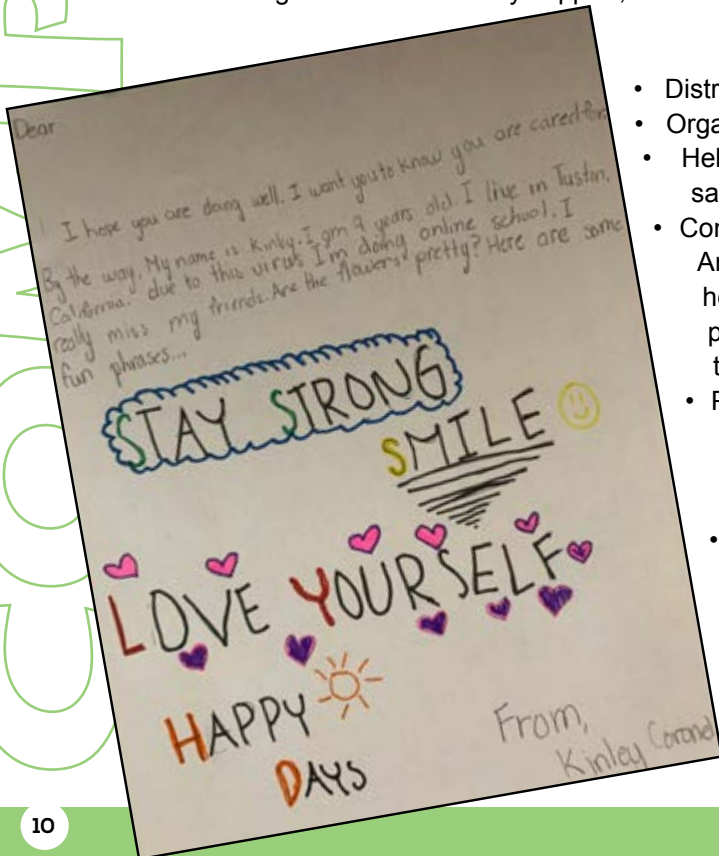
by Darshna Shah - TCCOP Team member

Jainism is sometimes referred to as “a compassionate religion” as Compassion is one of the main pillars. Lord Mahavira’s message is that we should love everybody and should not hurt anybody. We should try to help others and make them happy – that is compassion. This pandemic year has been unlike anything we have ever experienced, but it did give us an opportunity to be compassionate towards our fellow human beings.

Tender Care Community Outreach Program (TCCOP) was fortunate to be contacted by Dr. Elsie Briseno Simonovski - Director of Child Welfare and Attendance at the Buena Park School District about an annual program providing socio-economically disadvantaged students with jackets and shoes to ensure youth are taken care of during the holidays and the approaching cold winter season. This additional layer of support for basic needs would enable these youth to learn and grow in a comfortable environment. Ten students, from K to 8th grade, were nominated from the schools and the district office. These students live in garages, motels, shelters, camp sites, cars or share residences with other families, and a pair of good shoes and a warm jacket fulfills the basic clothing items needed so they may be able to thrive and learn their classroom lessons. Each student was handpicked from eight schools and went home with a big smile as this gift was a total surprise! With the generosity of discounted pricing from Skechers and the affordable pricing of items from Costco the smiles this year were priceless!



Thanks to generous community support, TCCOP was able to continue their Projects during Pandemic:



- Distributed hand-made face masks to healthcare workers,
- Organized sending hand written caring letters to seniors centers
- Helped the Covenant House in Los Angeles to distribute 600 sandwiches each month to homeless youth.
- Continued to deliver food supplies to the Community Center in Santa Ana, and hot meals & fruits to the Long Beach Church to feed homeless. Arranged for meals at WISE Place in Santa Ana - a non-profit organization which provides unaccompanied women with safe transitional and emergency needs.
- Provided grocery bags of beans, rice, and tortillas to 300 underserved families identified by Placentia- Yorba Unified School District. Also distributed 5 pound bags of rice and beans, oil and cereal to more than 300 families at the Valadez Middle School in Placentia.
- Virtual education is causing health and mental issues for under privileged students and their teachers, negatively impacting student grades. Supported Valadez Middle School teachers to take fresh fruits to these students during weekly home visits.
- Partnered with Sikh Center of Santa Ana in distributing groceries to over 650 needy families.

- Provided 2 bicycles to brothers who were helping their sick mother by bringing groceries home and a bicycle to a young mother to get to work.
- Delivered 400 blankets for the Smile Makers Holiday Gift program to celebrate seniors in licensed care facilities throughout Orange County.



TCCOP’s Story:

Tender Care Community Outreach Program (TCCOP) was founded ten years ago by a small group of volunteers who wanted to turn caring words into deeds. With the blessings and support of Anekant Community Center (ACC) which provides the umbrella organization covering our liability and financial management needs – we were off and running. We are guided by a few basic principles which have served us well and allowed us to be established as an organization that does “good” in the community.

- No need is too small or too large.
- All community members are welcome to participate in whatever capacity they can – as donors, as foot soldiers, as need identifiers, etc.
- Jain Center students are encouraged to participate in specific programs to instill caring for the community from a very young age.
- Ongoing activities such as weekly breakfast service, and monthly dinner service are sponsored by Jain Center families to commemorate birthdays, anniversaries or “tithis”.
- Support is not limited to Jain families, or only Indian families – anyone in need is helped if possible.
- The need once identified is properly vetted by one of our volunteers to ensure it is genuine.
- Support is provided by purchasing food, clothing, and other needed items – we never give cash (few exceptions had to be made when the pandemic hit)!
- Sponsorship drives are held during Paryushan, Mahavir Jayanti, and other Jain Center activities to raise community awareness and encourage participation.
- Special attention is given to students and elders in need – as they are the most needy members in any community.
- Donors have been identified that wish to be informed of needs as they arise so they can support the cause – large and small.

There is no magical blueprint for TCCOP-ACC’s success – other than a caring parent organization, dedicated volunteers and a Jain community with a large heart! A similar organization can be setup in your Jain Center and we will be delighted to help!

Making Ahimsā a Lifestyle Priority

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)



There is something uniquely horrible about the violence of the modern era. The ancient Jain tradition has a long history of analyzing the fundamental causes of violence to reveal solutions that begin with the core of who we are: beings who are essentially good and caring, and who can realize this essential part of ourselves by practicing nonviolence (*ahimsā*).

Preventable violence is increasing all around us. That is not a new revelation. However, what is alarming and needs to be reversed is the chilling fact that we are becoming increasingly used to it; it is becoming normal. Upon hearing about a mass killing, we quickly search to find its magnitude and location, and when we learn that it is not near us or does not directly affect us, we tend to relax and move on to other concerns. But should we just move on?

No, we shouldn't. We must not allow the escalation of violence in our modern society to become normal because violence is not our natural trait. On the contrary, Jain Dharma teaches us that nonviolence (*ahimsā*) is consistent with our natural way of being. All living beings around us are striving for peace, and no one likes to be hurt. Why then do we cause hurt to others?

Wild animals rarely attack others without a genuine

rationale: carnivores do so to satisfy their hunger or to protect themselves and their clan, and herbivores attack mainly for self-protection. Why is it that human beings behave differently? Why, for example, do we kill strangers who are not threatening us? And why do we call hunting and killing animals a "game"?

Video on Ahimsa by Phillip Wollen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsfX0u80M5c>

The answer lies in how we view life, and the unchecked erosion of our abilities to differentiate between right and the wrong. All living beings love peace and are endowed with intrinsic characteristics of consciousness, bliss, and vigor (*caitanya, sukha, vīrya*), to varying degrees. As, presumably, the most intelligent species on earth, our intellects should be accompanied by a heightened sense of responsibility, but we seem to disregard this. And we start faltering when we lose the sense of this responsibility. We tend to forget our essential selves, that our true purpose is to live compassionately and non-violently.



The essential self is a calm and pure soul in eternity. Continually over time, however, humans obstruct the natural goodness of our souls with actions triggered by the vicissitudes of our minds under the influence of ego, anger, greed, and deceit—features that are

collectively called “passions” (*kaṣāya-s*). These passions cause us to act contrary to our natural character. They trigger self-aggrandizement, and we start to believe that we are the smartest and most important, that our views are the only correct views and the only ones that matter, and other such notions. When others think differently than we do, and we are under the influence of our passions, we feel agitated and start acting in ways that are unnatural to us, and more often than not we become violent to some degree. Those who caused the 9/11 attack, one of the most gruesome human acts in recent history, thought that their way of living was the only legitimate way, and they aimed to convert or eliminate those who did not agree with it. This is only one example of how human passions turn to arrogance, and how arrogance can turn into an ideology that becomes violent in its expression.

Violence is not committed only through physical actions, as is generally perceived. One’s mind, body, and speech act in unison as an impetus to trigger the outward manifestation of violence. Mental trepidations and fear-based thinking are underlying factors, and their influences are carried out through speech and physical action. For instance, when a person contemplates and vengefully plots to hurt (insult, injure, or kill) someone, that person is engrossed in mental violence, which can manifest first in spiteful or hateful speech—another form of violence—that is often followed by actual physical violence by the individual or by others under that person’s influence. Thus, violence has many causal conditions that proceed its manifestation as a physical action.



Nonviolence in speech is especially important for leaders because speech is their primary medium to inspire their followers. Mahatma Gandhi, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, and Nelson

Mandela are glowing examples of the leaders who spoke compassionately and led millions of people to peacefully achieve what was perceived to be impossible without violence. But when a leader deliberately incites violence, for example by publicly characterizing members of an ethnic group as murderers and rapists, such speech incites hatred and violence toward that group. Such speech-instigated hatred is severe violence, and leaders must avoid it particularly because they influence many more individuals by speech than ordinary citizens do.

The purpose behind an act of violence is important. A surgeon making a cut on a patient’s body in an operation aimed to bring relief to the patient is an act of compassion. If the same physician does it with an intention to kill, however, that would be categorized as an act of inexcusable violence.

How an act of violence is committed is important as well. Unknowingly stepping on an insect while walking is inadvertent violence. By being careful, we can minimize such violence, but complete elimination of it is practically impossible. On the other hand, hitting someone while enraged during a heated argument, for example, is an act of serious violence. Such behavior occurs when one suddenly loses self-control upon not getting what is desired and/or is under the spell of passions such as jealousy, ego, and so on. Such tendencies can be controlled with behavioral restraints.

Extemporaneous violence of any kind is bad, but when someone schemes to commit violence, such as planning to attack another individual, this is a much worse form of violence because it has multidimensional involvement: the offender engages in regressive thoughts followed by violence of speech or of physical action or both. When accompanied by torture or physical abuse, violence becomes even more horrifying.

Factors that made the 9/11 attack so heinous included the detailed plan to kill as many people as possible, to pick sites that would flaunt the murderers’ atrocious capabilities, and then to proudly glorify the plan’s execution. The attack was inspired by their leaders’ mental disposition of revulsion toward those who did not follow a certain way of life, leading to actions such as hateful speech, recruitment drives, and urging others to plan to inflict maximum damage to life. Brainwashing followers with the lure of going to heaven after death, and the follow-up glorification and celebration of the attacks are all indicators of

the wicked violence on the part of the leaders of the 9/11 attacks. They thought their way of living was the only correct one and that everyone else must adhere to it, which resulted in the most horrific kind of violence.

Violence toward animals and ecology is widespread, and unfortunately it is not viewed as gravely as is violence against people. For instance, farmed animals like cows and chickens, sea creatures like salmon and lobsters, pets like dogs and cats, all breathe and have feelings of pain, suffering, and pleasure like us. Why then do we treat some animals like inanimate objects? Meat-producing corporations routinely brag about increasing “production” by creating faster breeding and shortened growing cycles, as if their “products” were lifeless objects. They gloat about increasing “production” using efficient broiler breeds using chemicals that make the animals grow bigger faster, with reduced feed. This type of growth is extremely painful for the animal because its body fat grows unnaturally fast, causing severe pain due to underdeveloped bone structures. Similar animal cruelty also occurs in the dairy industry. In some ways, violence against animals should be considered more horrible because they have no recourse to protect themselves; they are not intelligent and resourceful like humans are.

Human violence against ecology and the environment, due to both careless and deliberate actions for financial or lifestyle reasons continues to cause irreparable and irreversible damage.



Indiscriminate deforestation, unchecked pollution-causing lifestyles, the use of ecologically destructive substances, the wasteful use of water resources, all of these have contributed to the increase of wildfires, hurricanes, and other similar calamities. Unrestrained human behavior is causing the extinction of scores of species of animals (2 and ecology which will create long-term ecological imbalance with unpredictable damaging repercussions. These are all acts of violence that will

affect future generations. Carelessness can be absolved when followed by corrective action, but deliberate greed-driven actions are serious offenses.



One can surmise, as did the ancient Jain sages, that greed and uncontrolled behavior are the worst instigators of violence, directly or indirectly. It is very easy to be greedy about wealth, fame, power, education, possessions of various kinds, etc., and in some ways these inclinations are the hardest to control. When one comes under the influence of greed, one exerts all-out efforts to achieve the desired goal. This leads to egotistic behavior, and if one does not achieve or under-achieves the desired results, one gets angry, begins to make dubious plans, and becomes deceitful. Each of the passions instigate violence in the form of foul speech or physical action, or both. If we control our greed, and are respectful to everything around us, we can begin to restrain ourselves from actions based on anger, ego, arrogance, and deceit, and our violent tendencies start to diminish. In some sense, self-control and contentment are the most important traits to have for a broader cultivation of nonviolence. Jain Dharma teaches us that if we learn to control our own internal passions, which are the actual cause of violence, we will extinguish the cause of violence itself. In the modern age of horrific acts of violence, the message of Jain nonviolence is more important now than it has ever been.

1 For more in-depth information on this topic, see chapter 12, “Right Conduct and Doctrine of Ethics” in [An Introduction to Jain Philosophy](#), Parveen Jain, 2020.

2 See Jim Daley, “Silent Skies: Billions of North American Birds Have Vanished,” *Scientific American*, September 19, 2019, [ScientificAmerican.com](#), 2019

150th Birth Anniversary Celebration of Acharya Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Ji Maharaj

Anop R. Vora, Rochester, NY



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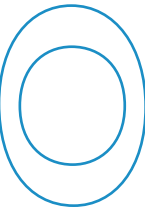


Acharya Vijay Vallabh's Life and Vision

Acharya Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Ji Maharaj (Acharya Ji) was born in 1870 and was initiated at the tender age of 17. He learned Jainism in depth from his guru-Shri Vinayanand Surishwer Ji Maharaj. The forward-looking Guruji taught him not only to make Jain teachings useful for his own spiritual growth but also for the benefit of the entire community through bold steps.

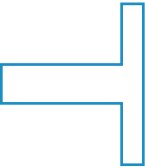


Apart from carrying out the usual rigors of a Jain Saint, Acharya Ji took his great Guru's commands to heart and embarked upon several social issues prevailing then. He initiated the work of amelioration of masses, spreading of moral values-based college education for holistic development, eradication of social evils, and women empowerment with a missionary zeal. His support for the independence movement, swadeshi and promotion of Hindi was also commendable. For him, the path for Jain Saint's coveted goal of self-enlightenment passed through the practice of common good. His emphasis on community service, education, self-reliance, and dissemination of Jain literature spurred the conscience of the society and nation during his lifetime and continues to serve as a shining beacon for all of us at present. Acharya Ji came up with a vision that was well ahead of his time. He was very courageous because he came up with far-reaching steps that usually do not fall into the traditional domain of a Jain monk. He chose to think "out of the box" as he was no ordinary person. His vision carries a remarkable imprint even today. His life and ideals uplifted the entire community and he will be remembered by generations to come.

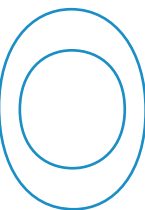


Acharya Ji's impact on my life

I would like to acknowledge the impact made by Acharya Ji in my own life. I spent 5 years at the Baroda branch of Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya (MJV) and received my bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering. Then I came to the States in mid-sixties and did very well in all aspects of my life. My parents had no means of putting me through the college back then and it was MJV who helped me when I needed the support badly. After I settled down in America, I was able to help my siblings and relatives and in the process, my entire family got a huge financial uplift. This was all possible due to the vision of Acharya ji who helped establish the first branch of MJV at Mumbai in 1915 and then several more branches sprung up across the nation because his initial step was a grand success. MJV has helped thousands of students over the years and made their future very bright.



In all humility, my story is not unique by any means; but I am using it to highlight the power of education that was well recognized by Acharya Ji in the times when higher education was looked down upon by the community in general. The Jains were mainly merchants in those days and to succeed in business, they needed education no more than matriculation; sometimes not even that much. Besides, college education for the girls was a rarity- especially in rural areas. Acharya Ji saw the huge potential of the Jain community that no one else could see it before and took active steps to bring it out. We can never thank Acharya Ji enough for the huge impact he has left on the society. I bow down with reverence and express my deep gratitude from the bottom of my heart to this great Jain saint of India.



The Accomplishments by Acharya Ji's disciples

Acharya Ji emphasized the importance of organized effort and inspired setting up of local Sabhas (associations) by the name Shri Atmanand Jain Sabha at various places and then fostered the formation of Shri Atmanand Jain Mahasabha in Punjab. Later on, Guru Nityanand Ji motivated Eastern, Southern, Central and other regions to have Mahasabha and then in 2004, completed the setting up of a pan India Mahasangh (Parent Association) as an apex body. Mahasangh had been entrusted the task of the celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Acharya Ji this year. Currently, Atma Vallabh organizations are present across the length and breadth of India – right from Jammu to Pondicheri & Kakinada and from Kuchh to Kolkata.

150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations

Acharya Ji's birthday celebrations commenced on 29th October 2019. It entailed many religious congregations and devotional programs. First major program was held at Dadar, Mumbai during the monsoon months and many beneficial activities were initiated.

Thereafter Acharya Ji's disciple- Vijay Nityanand Surishwer Ji Maharaj, arrived at Acharya Ji's birthplace Vadodara for a major 2-day International program on 28th & 29th December 2019, with a large number of devotees gathering from all over the World. The two day cultural extravaganza included soul stirring speeches, three exhibitions on Acharya Ji's life and ideals, Premier show of a 3 hr. documentary film on Acharya Ji and exquisite cultural programs from four educational institutions including Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya (MJV). Consent by a Jain family from Ambala to the initiation of their young Son – Sarthak (C.A.) became the high point of the 2 day event.

Immediately thereafter, in the premises of MJV, Ahmedabad, inauguration of a new, most modern Hostel Building was carried out in the presence of Acharya Nityanand Ji, the Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijay Rupani, Sudhir Mehta and other dignitaries. This year's Vijay Vallabh Puraskar was also awarded to MJV by Vallabh Smarak Jain Mandir Tirth, Delhi for the excellent work being done for promoting the cause of Moral Values Based College Education – a caused espoused by Acharya Ji all his life.

Atma Vallabh institutions all over India made best efforts to provide poverty relief, medical emergency and children's education to needy Jains expeditiously.

All monks under the leadership of Acharya Nityanand ji provided the soul solacing comfort to many devotees suffering from the adverse impact of Corona and also kept up the tempo of religious activities digitally.



Ashok Jain and Deepak Jain presenting excellence award for MJV to Sudhir Mehta, Chairman, MJV. It was part of a year-long celebration of Acharyaji



Grand Finale

- 151” tall statue composed of 8 materials and entitled **Statue of Peace** of Acharya Ji was installed at Vijay Vallabh Sadhana Kendra, Jetpur. The unveiling of the statue was done remotely due to Coronavirus. Following the inspirational talks by Mr. Sudhir Mehta, Chairman of the Celebration Committee and Nityanand Ji, Prime minister-Modi Ji unveiled the Statue from New Delhi. Concurrently, the visual impact of chanting of mantras by Nityanand Ji and showering of flowers and spontaneous pleasure outburst by the devotees gathered in front of the statue created positive vibrations for this auspicious occasion.
- This was followed by a direct-from-the heart address by Modi Ji in which he highlighted with reverence the benevolent deeds of Acharya Ji – spread of values-based education, character building, women empowerment, eradication of social evils, supporting the independence movement and swadeshi, use of home spun clothing, promotion of Hindi, promotion of world peace, universal brotherhood and harmony. Prime Minister also related recent steps taken by his Government which resonated with what Acharya Ji worked on during his whole life.

To listen to the entire speech of Modi Ji, please click on <https://youtu.be/UdLzGilpXp8>

- The dignitaries who participated in the deliberations were:
Saints: Gachhadhipati Acharya Shree Vijay Nityanand Surishwer Ji, Gachhadhipati Acharya Shree Vijay Nityanand Surishwer Ji, Acharya Shree Vijay Jayanand Surishwer Ji, Acharya Shree Vijay Chidanand Surishwer Ji, Muniraj Shree Mokshanand Vijay Ji, & Sadhu – Sadhwi Vrind
Office Bearers and others: Sudhir U.Mehta, Chairman of Celebration Committee, Raj Kumar Jain Oswal, President, Akhil Bhartiya Shree Atma Vallabh Jain Mahasangh Trust, Ashok Jain, General Secretary – Celebration Committee, Ghisu Lal Surana, President – Vijay Vallabh Sadhana Kendra, Jetpur, Pradip Rathod, Mumbai, Padam Chowdhary & Arun Ostwal, and Has Mukkh Gadecha, MJV Secretary.
Speakers for the event: Dr. Kumarpal Desai, Sh J.L.Oswal, Mahesh Wadher, Natubhai Shah (UK), Dr Jaswant Modi, Pravin C.Shah, Anop Vora, Dr. Jayesh Shah, Dr. Vasumati Daga, Mahendra Mast, Dr. Bipin Doshi, Dr Mehool Sangharjka (UK), Smitaben Babubhai Shah (UK), Dr. Manilal Mehta, Chandmal Hingad , Pritiben N Shah, Gunwant Barvalia & P.L.Singhwi

The celebrations may have come to an end but not the good work and the resolve all Guru Vijay Vallabh’s devotees and followers have taken to whole heartedly carry on with the Vallabh Mission in a *missionary mode*.

(My heart-felt thanks to Ashok Jain, Pankaj C. Jain, Has Mukkh Gadecha, and Hitesh Doshi who provided much of the content for this article.)

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Book Report: Mute Clay (*Mook Mati*) - By Acharya Shri Vidyasagar Ji Maharaj

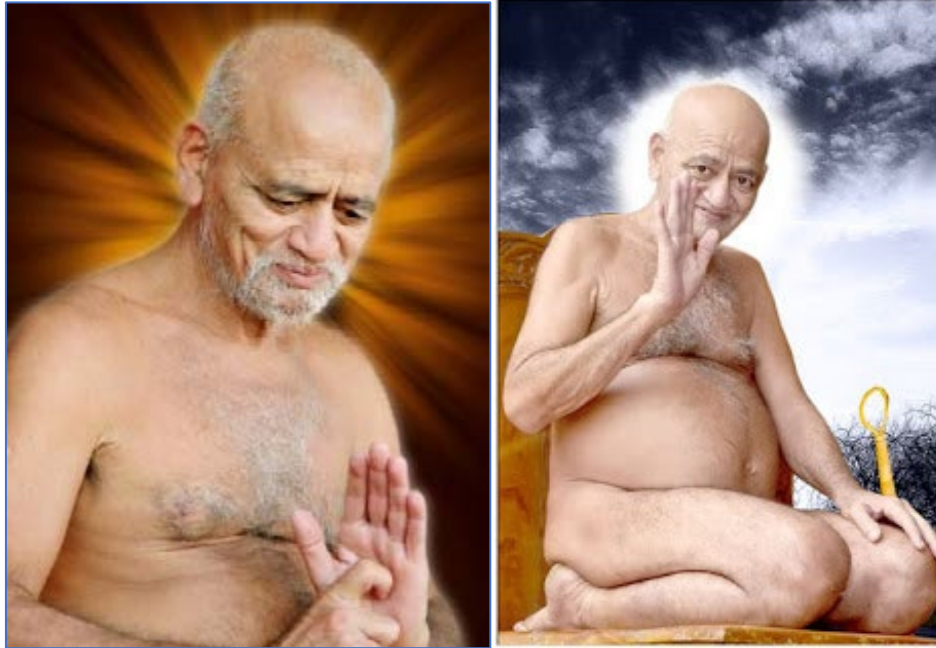
By Noopur Jain



A regular swadhyayi for more than a decade, Noopur has been learning all major scriptures of Jainism in an organized, systematic manner towards completing a 5 year certification program from India. Her dream is to someday do more research and prove/present to the world the systematic relationship between science (logic) and Jainism, specifically for the younger generation. On the worldly side, she is a registered Professional Engineer (PE) and Structural Engineer (SE) working for the State of California delivering the nation's first High-Speed Rail program.

Awed! Deepened! Transformed! ...after reading "*Mook Mati*", the Epic Poem (*Maha Kavya*) in both Hindi and English! Written by the magician of words, as if direct *kevali bhagwan* is here to give his *deshna*; none other than our reverend and supreme guru 108 Acharya Shri VidyaSagarji Maharaj.

Namostu Guruvar! Namostu! Namostu! Namostu!



An amazingly transforming story of mute (*Mook*) clay (*Mati*), illustrating her journey from being mere clay to becoming the auspicious pot (*Mangal Kalash*), as sculpted by the potter (reverend Guru), who will guide the path towards *Moksha* of every human being who takes on this journey him/herself. A must read, to absorb and to contemplate upon, for all who aspire to take one step closer to *Moksha*.

Epics (*Maha Kavya*) are an important aspect and part of any literature. Only a very few gifted, talented, and brilliant, the rarest of rare great poets are there who could have envisioned and created such rich literature. This epic story is an unmatched creation of the 20th century. It has ability to provide us the accurate cognition and detailed narration of *Jeev-Ajeev* or the living and non-living. Every aspect of this life and human emotions are described with much clarity and details. This incomparable epic informs us about the true nature of the soul, the life and the reality of this world.

The potter (*Guru*) understands the true and absolute nature of the clay; he beats it, sieves it, and then cleans it from impurities like stones. He converts the clay into its softest, purest form devoid of any *sankar dosh* (impurities). The clay then goes through the tough journey; through rotations on the potter wheel and sustaining the high heat of the kiln. And finally, after all the penance, it reaches her destination by becoming the auspicious pot used for *Pooja*. It attains the ultimate goal of her life!

Some may call it as a love story (spiritual kind albeit) with the clay as the *Nayika* (heroine) and the Guru as the *Nayak* (hero). The heroine has been waiting for millions of years for the hero to come and rescue her; to free her from the bondages. The Karma-bound soul's step by step journey towards purification and ultimately to "the destination" is what is portrayed here through the journey of the mute clay.

While reading this epic, it feels as if the poet Acharya Shri VidyaSagarji Maharaj is sitting in *Samosharan* as *Tirthankar Bhagwan* himself and we are there listening to his *Divya Dhwani* (divine knowledge). He is singing this music of the soul from self-experience! Only a self-realized saint like him, with deep understanding, immense *sadhana* and *swa-anubhuti* can describe it so vividly. Acharya Shri's sole purpose is to awaken us beings, who are asleep for past so many lives, and inspire us to follow the path towards ultimate happiness.

Acharya Shri's words are magical; nothing like it! It is the magic of Acharya Shri's amazing poetry style that he has portrayed the sheer clay, the downtrodden and distressed one, as the hero and main subject of the story. He has given words and power of thoughts to the mute clay and her deep undisclosed desires to be free. With his magical use of Hindi grammar and deep meaning behind his words, this epic poem provides a new horizon and dimension to the reader in understanding the deep ocean of knowledge that comes from Jain *Agams* (scripture). The narrative exposes the reader to lessons from Jain scripture, nay all scripture.

Few sample lines in Hindi (table below) translates like this (keep in mind the limitations of translations) –

"While walking on this path, control your passions. By being such a traveler (*Raahi*), you will be a diamond (*Hiraa*). In Hindi, the inversion of the word for a traveler (*Raahi*) is a 'diamond' (*Raahi and Hiraa*). You will have to follow a hard discipline of body and mind. You will have to burn yourself down to ash (*Raakh*), do rigorous penance. In Hindi, the inversion of the word for ash is 'true' (*Raakh and Kharaa*). Then the soul-power will descend in you. Burning down your passions is the key to true achievement." With this, the clay, generous like the sea, gives the grains her blessings.

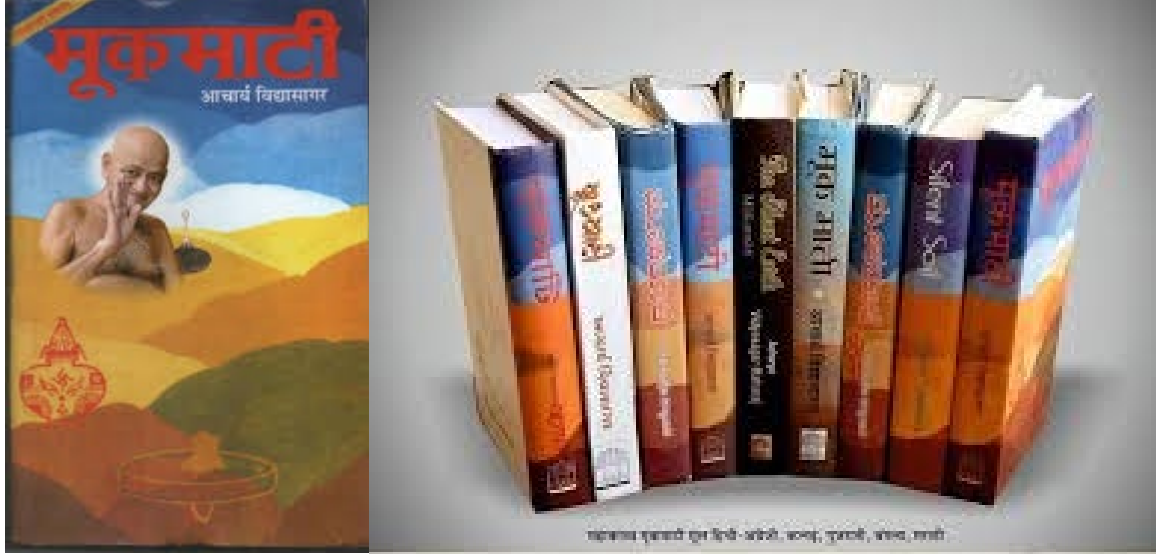
<p>“संयम की राह चलो राही बनना ही तो हीरा बनना है, स्वयं राही शब्द ही विलोम-रूप से कह रहा है। रा...ही...ही...रा और इतना कठोर बनना होगा कि</p>	<p>तन और मन को तप की आग में तपा-तपा कर जला-जला कर राख करना होगा यतना घोर करना होगा तभी कहीं चेतन-आत्मा खरा उतरेगा।</p>	<p>खरा शब्द भी स्वयं विलोम-रूप से कह रहा है राख बने बिना खरा-दर्शन कहाँ ? रा...ख..ख...रा' और आशीष के हाथ उठाती-सी माटी की मुद्रा उदार समुद्रा।</p>
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Another magical translation of the famous Sutra "*Utpaad-vyaya-Dhrovya-yuktam sat.*" (उत्पाद-व्यय-ध्रौव्य-युक्तं सत्।):

<p>बोल-चाल की भाषा में इस सूत्र का भावानुवाद प्रस्तुत है : आना, जाना, लगा हुआ है आना यानी जनन-उत्पाद है जाना यानी मरण-व्यय है लगा हुआ यानी स्थिर-ध्रौव्य है और है यानी चिर-सत् यही सत्य है, यही तथ्य...!</p>	<p>The gist of this can be translated in everyday speech thus: Coming and going is an ongoing phenomenon. Coming means birth or creation. Going means death or destruction. Ongoing signifies it is steady and permanent. Is means it is the permanent truth. That is the truth, the reality.</p>
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Acharya Shri is the majestic magician of words and wisdom, the great saint of modern era 'Pancham Kal' who is living up to and carrying the tradition "Parampara" of Bhagwan Mahaveer Swami, Gautam Gandhar and Acharya KundKund to its fullest!

The seekers of Moksha! Calling upon you to immerse yourself and take a deep dive into this ocean of knowledge and listen to the music of the soul, through this one of a kind epic, by one and only - Acharya Shri Vidyasagarji Maharaj ki Jai!



The book has been translated into many languages. It is about 500 pages; divided into four sections:

Canto I: Not Sinking but Rising in Caste
(संकर नहीं : वर्ण लाभ)

Canto II: Words are not knowledge, Knowledge is Not Realization
(शब्द सो बोध नहीं : बोध सो शोध नहीं)

Canto III: Nurturing Merit, Washing away Sins
(पुण्य का पालन : पाप प्रक्षालन)

Canto IV: The Test by Fire, the Silver-like Ash
(अग्नि की परीक्षा : चांदी-सी राख)

Amazon Link to the English translation:

<https://www.amazon.com/Mute-Clay-Strong-Spirit-Transaltion/dp/818570838X>

Amazon Link to the Hindi original book:

<https://www.amazon.in/Mook-Hindi-Vidhya-Sagar-Maharaj/dp/8126308524>

Are Body and Soul Separate?

Compiled by: Raj Kumar Jain; Editor, Education Section

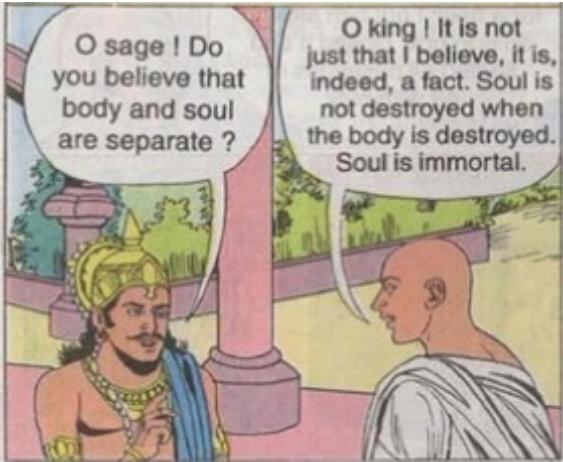
(Sources: www.nirgranth.in, <http://jainliterature.weebly.com>)

[Many of the world religions believe in the existence of the Soul. However, many of us may wonder if the soul and the body are separate entities or not. In other words when the body dies, does the soul also die? In the story below, Muni Keshikumar explains to King Pradeshi how body and soul are separate.]

One of the Jain doctrines, Nandi Sutra contains the description of eleven Anga Agams and twelve Upanga Agams. Amongst them, Rai-paseniya Sutra is the Upanga of the second Anga Agam namely Sutrakritanga. It is the second Upanga relating this Agam to Sutrakritanga. Sutrakritanga mentions three hundred and sixty three different philosophies namely Kriyavadi, Akriyavadi, Ajnanvadi, Vinayavadi. Based on Akriyavadi(non action of the soul) philosophy, the philosophical beliefs of King Pradeshi have been presented and Muni Keshikumar Shraman had provided the logical refutation of all such beliefs. The primary description in this Sutra is that of King Pradeshi.

King Pradeshi was a staunch believer in oneness of soul and body from the time period belonging to Lord Parshvanath's (23rd Tirthankara) ascetic order. He was extremely cruel, merciless and contemptuous towards religion by temperament. King Pradeshi was irreligious, highly sinful, preaching sin, was following sinful ways, and always preferring sin to piety.

It all started one fine morning, when Chitra, the chariot driver, brought King Pradeshi to where monk, Muni Keshikumar was giving a sermon; The king sat down and asked Muni Keshikumar,



King Pradeshi: "O sage! Do you believe that body and soul are separate?"

Muni Keshikumar: "O king! It is not just that I believe - it is, indeed a fact. Soul is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. Soul is immortal where the body is not."

King Pradeshi: "If soul is immortal do you mean that my grandfather, who like me, loved violence must have gone to hell after his death?"

Muni Keshikumar: "Yes! Those who commit violence go only to hell."

King Pradeshi: "But he never came back to tell me -"Son, I suffer the bitter fruits of violence. Therefore, you should not indulge in violence." Had he said that to me, I would have accepted your doctrine."

Muni Keshikumar: "O king! Consider this, there is some great criminal and you have caught him after great effort. You sentence him to death, he requests you to leave for some time so that he could go and tell his family members to avoid the crimes that he had committed. Would you allow him to leave?"

King Pradeshi: "Not at all, such a criminal cannot be allowed to go."

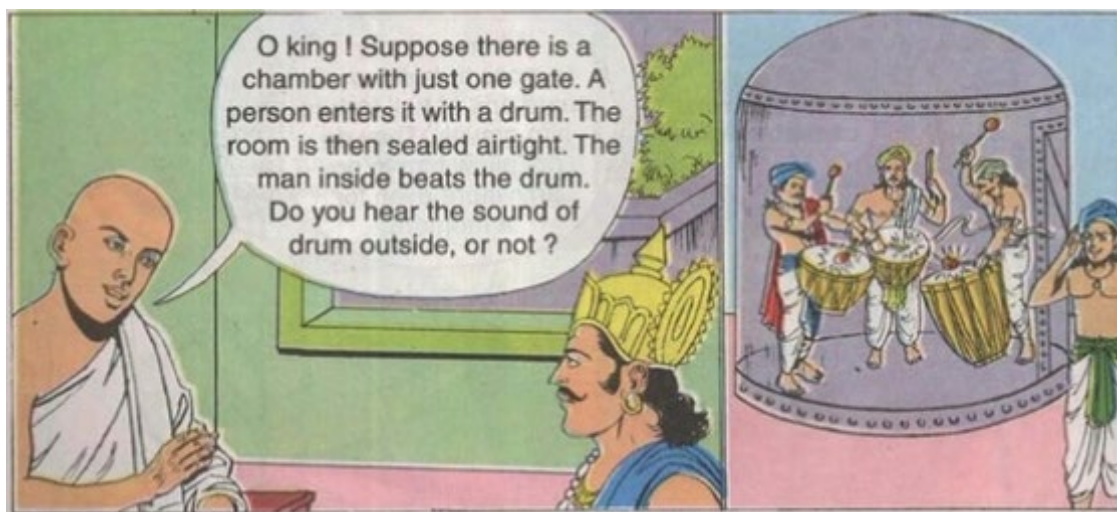
Muni Keshikumar: "When the sinner goes to hell, the guardians of hell torture him gravely. They do not allow him to go anywhere even for a moment." So, how would your grandfather be allowed to come out and warn you?"

King Pradeshi: "O sage! By an experiment I have proved that within the body there is nothing like a soul. I passed death sentences for a thief. I put him alive in an iron box, closed it and sealed all passages of air with clay. A few days later I got the box opened. The thief was dead, I found no hole in it. Tell me from where the soul escaped? This proves that when body is dead, the soul is destroyed. Thus the two are one and the same."

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Muni Keshikumar: "O king, suppose there is a chamber with just one gate. A person enters with a drum, the room is then sealed airtight. The man inside beats the drum, do you hear the sound of the drum outside or not?"

King Pradeshi: "Yes I can hear."



Muni Keshikumar: "When a material thing like sound can come out of a sealed place without being seen, what is the problem in coming out of a subtle formless thing like soul?"

King Pradeshi: "Accepted that soul can come out of an airtight place, but it should at least be visible." He then narrated his experience: "There is no soul in this body. Once I sentenced a criminal to death. I got his body cut to pieces to find where was his soul, but I failed to see it."

The sage smiled and said, "O king! You talk foolishly like those woodcutters who went to the jungle and carried some wood for fire for cooking but no fire. One of the elders said, get some fire out of Arni wood and cook food."

King Pradeshi: "What next?"

The old man left. The woodcutter brought Arni wood and broke it into pieces, but No fire come out of it. He then broke it into smaller pieces but still failed to find the fire. By then the old man had returned – "You are a Lair", said the woodcutter. There is no fire in Arni wood. "See I have broken it into so many pieces, but no fire."

Old man: Give it to me. The old man took to pieces of Arni wood and rubbed them together, the sparks were produced and fire was lit. See, here is the fire. The woodcutter was amazed.

Muni Keshikumar: "In the same way the flame that is soul resides in the body. In order to see, one must grind it with form of austerities, and the meditation has to be performed. Only then the flame, like the soul is seen. The king debated for some time and accepted the notion of what Muni Keshikumar was telling him about the soul being different then the body as it appeared to him that Muni Keshikumar was telling him the truth."

King Pradeshi: "My belief seems to have been wrong, what the sags is true. Body is made of material things. Soul is transcendental, like the flame in a lamp. The soul resides in the body. As flame and lamp are separate so are soul and the body." After pondering for some time, said, king Pradeshi, "You say that we all move around due to our soul. Can you hold that conscious soul in your palm and show me?"

Muni Keshikumar: "O King! See those branches of tree overhead. Why its leaves are moving? Who shakes them?"

King Pradeshi: "They are moving due to the wind."

Muni Keshikumar: "So, can you hold this in your palm and show me?"

King Pradeshi: "No! this air cannot be held in your palm.

Muni Keshikumar: "King! When a substance like air cannot be held in the palm of your hands, how can a formless thing like soul be held and shown in the palm of your hands?"

King Pradeshi: "All right sage! Do you say that the soul of an ant and an elephant are equal?"

Muni Keshikumar: "Yes, O king! The size of the soul is equal in all beings.

King Pradeshi: "Dose an ant and an elephant have equal strength and power?"

Muni Keshikumar: "No, an elephant is stronger than an ant.

King Pradeshi: "How soul of the two can be equal?"



Muni Keshikumar: "O King! Imagine a person carrying a burning lamp in his hand, enters a small room and closes it, how far the light of the lamp will spread?"

King Pradeshi: "It will be limited to the room only."

Muni Keshikumar: "Now that person puts a large iron cover over the lamp, how far the light will spread now?"

King Pradeshi: "Now the light will be within that cover. There will be darkness outside."

Muni Keshikumar: "In the same way, O king! The light of the lamp, i.e. the soul, spreads or gets confined according to the available space."

King Pradeshi: "You mean the light is the same, but it becomes large or small according to the area."

Muni Keshikumar: "Yes, O king! You have understood it correctly. There is no difference in the substance of the soul, but its area of influence is confined to the body the soul attains."

King Pradeshi: "But O sage! My Grandfather always believed body and soul to be one and always indulged in violent activities. He spent his life enjoying mundane pleasures. How can I abandon the tradition of my ancestors?"

Muni Keshikumar: "O king a person who is adamant on his false premises, repents in the end. I will tell you a story of an Iron-trader so that you may not have to repent like that Iron-trader in the end. Listen carefully.

Some traders left their city in search of business. On the way they found iron mines. One of them said, "We should collect iron ore in bundles. When we arrive in a city we will sell it and earn some money." Each one of them collected the iron ore in bundles.

Some distance away they found copper mines. They consulted each other, "Let us throw away the iron ore and collect this copper ore." Everyone collected copper except one who was very adamant. He said, "I do not change my decisions time and again. What I have taken once is final."

After going some distance, they found silver and gold mines. They said to the fourth, "Brother! Now at least throw iron and collected gold. Your poverty will be removed in one stroke." The fourth replied, "You all are like clay models and keep on changing every moment. I am a determined man. What I have taken once is final."

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Muni asked the King, "Tell me king, who was right?"

King Pradeshi: "What the three of them said was correct. The fourth was stone dumb. To carry iron when gold is available is absolute foolishness?"

Muni Keshikumar continued the story.

Going further across a diamond mine, the three threw away the gold and collected diamonds but the fourth was still adamant on his idea that what was taken once was final, he retained his iron. When they reached the city the three traders sold their diamonds and become rich and influential. They started leading a happy life. The fourth sold his iron and become a hawker.

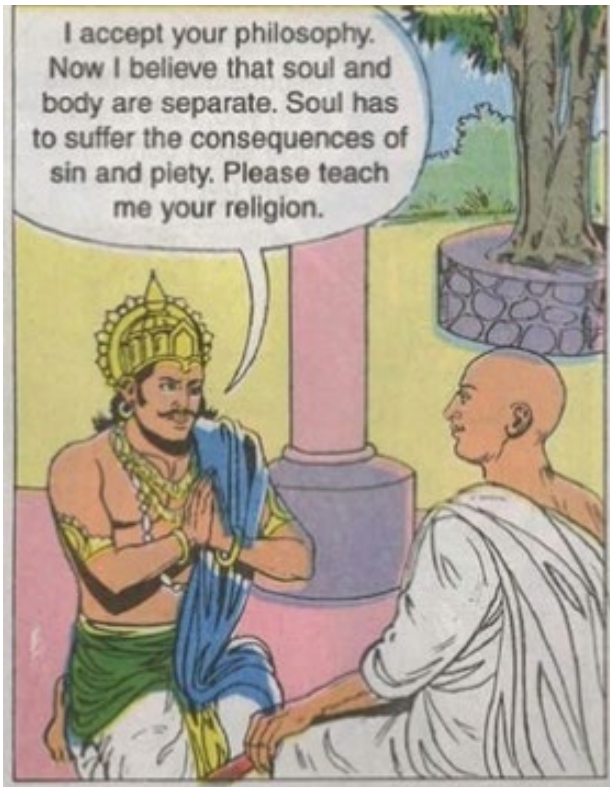
One day while the hawker was moving around one of his old companions recognized him. He sent his servant to call the hawker. On his arrival he was asked, "Don't you recognize me?"

The hawker said, "Sir! Why make fun of a poor man. I am nothing before you. If you are a mighty rich man, I am very poor."

The merchant laughed and said, "I am your old companion who discarded the iron, silver and then the gold for diamonds, but in spite of all advice you remained adamant and stuck to your iron."

The hawker stared wide eyed at the merchant's grandeur and cursed himself 'Alas!! I have ruined myself, there was no use crying over spilt milk...'

Explaining the theme of the story, Muni Keshikumar said, "King Pradeshi! If you remain trapped in shackles of the ways of your grandfather, you too may have to repent like that."



King Pradeshi: "Gurudev! I have understood the lesson. It is foolish to have false dogmas even after knowing the truth, I am not such a fool. After that, the king joined his palms, kneeled, and said, "I accept your philosophy. Now I believe that soul and body are separate. Soul has to suffer the consequences of sin and piety. Please teach me your religion."

Muni Keshikumar gave King Pradeshi lessons on fundamentals of Jainism including Ahimsa, kindness, truth, celibacy, detachment and austerities and added - "O king! A being has to bear the fruits of his deeds. Therefore always do good deeds. Noble actions bring noble fruits."

King Pradeshi: "Gurudev ! Since this day I accept the path of austerities and discipline shown by you. I abandon violence and resolve to be kind, compassionate and loving to all.

The king then returned to his palace a changed man after paying homage to Muni Keshikumar.

Anekant Community Center's Activities in 2020

By Dr. Nitin Shah, Director, ACC

Anekant Community Center (ACC) in Los Angeles has been doing humanitarian work in different parts of the world, 2020 started extremely well as in January we organized 10 medical/surgical missions in Mumbai, Gujarat & Kutch. Then came COVID-19 pandemic and posed challenges for all other local and international missions! ACC quickly changed gears and treated pandemic as an opportunity to embark on different types of humanitarian work. Below are the details of few activities that ACC has been blessed to carry out amidst the Pandemic!

Pre-COVID-19

I. Medical & Surgical missions in India – Over 14 days in 10 places we show 4588 patients for medical check up, did 297 surgeries and gave 1105 eyeglasses. (raised \$ 36,500).

Activities since COVID-19

II. United Sikh Mission – Cooked 3000 to 4000 meals per day for underprivileged. (raised \$ 42,601).

III. Refurbished Chromebooks (RCB) – Our pride project started in partnership with Sarva Mangal Family Trust (SMFT, Manu & Rika Shah) for initial 500 RCB to four schools in Southern California. Then joined hands with JAINA to give another 1200 through various Jain Organizations in US & Canada. It was extended to others and we have given another 300 so far bringing a total donation of over 2000 RCB to children for Online learning! SMFT plans to continue and ACC wish to join. (raised \$ 131,352).

IV. Ghana Eye Surgeries – Realizing travel limitations Dr. Nitin Shah called Dr. Boetang Wiafe in Accra, Ghana and requested to full fill ACC's dream of doing 2020 Cataract Surgeries around the world. Requested to perform at least 1000 of those with local resources! Dr. Boetang gave the most pleasant surprise and agreed to do 2020 eye surgeries with our support! They have so far performed 1124 eye surgeries. (raised \$ 51,185).

V. Ghana Medical Checkup – United Service to Africa in USA & Seventh Day Adventist Organization in Ghana agreed to host medical missions for medical screening and distribution of eyeglasses to needy. DiwaliBa Trust (BU Patel) donated 5000 lbs of medicines which we transported to Ghana. They plan to see over 4000 patients. They have seen

2784 patients and given 410 eyeglasses so far. (raised over \$ 50, 000).

VI. Nigeria Eye Surgeries – Nigeria requested us to support 300 cataract surgeries out of 1000 that Rotary Club of Lagos and Geeta Ashram were working on. We got blessed and have been able to raise funds for 500 Cataracts instead of 300! Nigeria has already taken care of 806 (106 from our sponsorship) so far and plans to complete 394 in early 2021. (raised \$ 22,220).



VII. Miscellaneous – Monthly blood donation drives with American Red Cross at Sanatan Dharma Temple, Donation to Sight & Sketches to help underprivileged in Anaheim, SMFT's sponsorship to Bhansali Trust in India.

We appreciate all Donors who have contributed to above projects, we could not have done it without your support. Due to space limitations, we are listing donors who have contributed \$ 5000 or more.

They are in random order - Anonymous, Tarsadia Foundation, Wadher Family Foundation, Sarva Mangal Family Trust, Hina & Nikhil Dhami, Diwaliba Trust (India), Choksi Family, Dr. Neena & Bharat Patel Foundation, Madhu & Ashok Patel, Hina and Bipin Hira, United Service to Africa, Bina & Dr. Nitin Ambani, Drs. Meera & Jasvant Modi, Federation of Jain Associations in North America, Jain Center of Southern California, Priti & Siddharth Shah, Michelle & Neil Patel, Jain Society of San Diego, Roopa & Dr. Ashok Sharma, Love all serve all, Inc., Swati & Akshay Jhaveri.

Michchami Dukkadam if we missed any information and donors' names, please forgive us.

INFORMATION

Accomplishments of JAINA Academic Liaison Committee (ALC)

Compiled by Dr. Sulekh Jain

[In November 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

ALC is one of the most active committees of JAINA and is working diligently to establish Centers for study, teaching and research in Jain Dharma at universities and colleges in USA and Canada. Due to time limitations, a few of the recent activities were not covered in the special edition. In this article, we provide you the latest developments.]

JAINA ALC Membership

To make ALC more representative, active and dynamic, we added 14 new members (this includes 4 female members too) thus growing the membership from just 8 to 22. ALC meets regularly and quite frequently on zoom.

The new members are:

Drs. Mukesh Doshi (Chicago), Narendra Parson (LA), Faquir Jain (Connecticut), Shailendra Palvia (Long Island), Mamata Shaha (NY), Kirti Jain (KY), Sushama Parekh (LA), Parveen Jain (San Jose), Atul Shah (London, U.K), Shugan Jain (Delhi, India), Priti Kothari (FL), Mr. Hans Jain (Toronto, Canada), Mr. Pankaj Shah (Boston) Mrs. Mohini Jain (Sacramento)

New Gnan Mandirs Established

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

1. Endowed Jain Scholar Programs:

With a donation of \$ One Million, a handful of donors established the first of its kind multi-disciplinary program at **Cerritos Community College in LA.**

2. Endowed Chairs Established

- **Shri Anantnath Endowed Chair** in Jain Studies at the **University of Wisconsin Madison, WI**
- **Shri Shantinath Endowed Chair** in Jain Studies at the **Ahimsa Center at Cal Poly Pomona, CA**
- **Endowed Joint Chair** in Jain and Hindu Dharma at **Cal State University, Fresno, CA**

3. Lectureships in Jain Studies

- With an annual donation of \$50K, established a new **Lectureship positions at UCLA and University of Connecticut at Storrs, CT.**
- **Adjunct Lectureship Jain Studies program at University of Dayton, OH**

4. Jain Studies Program at University of Chicago:

Several Jain donors in Chicago with pledges of \$50K each year, came forward to augment the Jain Studies program

New Positions Advertised

To fill some open positions, 4 job Ads (for Univ of Toronto, Willamette, UCLA and UNT) are already out and we expect that all the vacant positions will be filled and become fully operational within 1-3 years

New Initiatives

To support many of the growing activities, following new programs were established.

- **Annual Jain Academic Convention:** Just like JAINA and YJA conventions every other year, starting from this year, ALC started an annual Jain Academic convention. First such full day virtual (on zoom) convention was held on November 7, 2020. It was hosted by UCR and was a great success.
- **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 in India, started Bhagwan Mahavir Fellowships in Prakrit. Under this program in 2019, 3 PhD scholars spent 8 months in India (was cut short due to Covid-19). We plan to offer 3-4 such fellowships again this year.
- **Online Free Access Course in Jainism:** Dr. Christopher Miller, Bhagwan Mallinath Professor in Jain studies at LMU has developed 14 lectures Online in English. These are available free online anywhere in the World. Recently GHENT University in Ghent Belgium and LMU are collaborating to dub these lectures in German, French and Dutch languages and make them freely available in Europe.

Conferences, Lectures and Symposiums

Last few months we have seen lot of activities by the academics and the Jain community to organize academic lectures and symposiums. Here is a listing of some of such programs

- **International Symposium on Jain Mathematics:** This was sponsored by Jain Center of Greater Boston and JAINA and was held virtual (on zoom) on December 12-14. More than 25 very high quality papers on the treasures of knowledge in Jain agmas, contributions by the Jain thinkers and acharyas and where do we go from here were presented. This was a very new and historic beginning. The symposium was attended by 125 - 150 people every day from India, China, Europe and North America.
- **Symposium on “Illness, Medicine, and Healing in the Jain Tradition”** at UC Riverside was held on December 12 and 13, 2020.
- **Annual Peace and Religion Symposium** was held at Cal State University, Fullerton, on November 20 & 21.

Guest Lectures

- In early December 2020, UCR invited Prof Eva de Clercq of Ghent university in Ghent Belgium to deliver a very illuminating guest lecture on Jain Mahabharata
- In November 2020, Dr. Brianne Donaldson organized a very thought provoking and informative lecture on advances in alternatives to animal testing for drug development by Dr. Donald Ingbera, MD/PhD from Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering at Harvard University.
- On November 14, 2020, Dr. Sulekh Jain delivered the first inaugural Shailendra Palvia lecture on Jain Dharma and Bhagwan Mahavir at Long Island University in NY
- From December 28 2020 to January 6, 2021, ISJS organized a very successful ISJS winter program in Jain Studies via Zoom. This was attended by 40 scholars from 9 countries including 2 from Pakistan

Other Developments

- On November 28, 2020, Dr. Abhay Firodia, Chairman Force Motors Ltd and Amar Prerna Trust, Pune, India delivered a lecture on his upcoming Jain museum on 42-acre land near Pune and his vision and plans (near term and short term) and pledged to provide full support to International School for Jain Studies (which is now under his wings) to enhance Jain academic activities globally.
- Dr. Nitin Shah Vice Chair ALC and Dr. Narendra Parson (ALC member) are now newly appointed Board members of ISJS India.

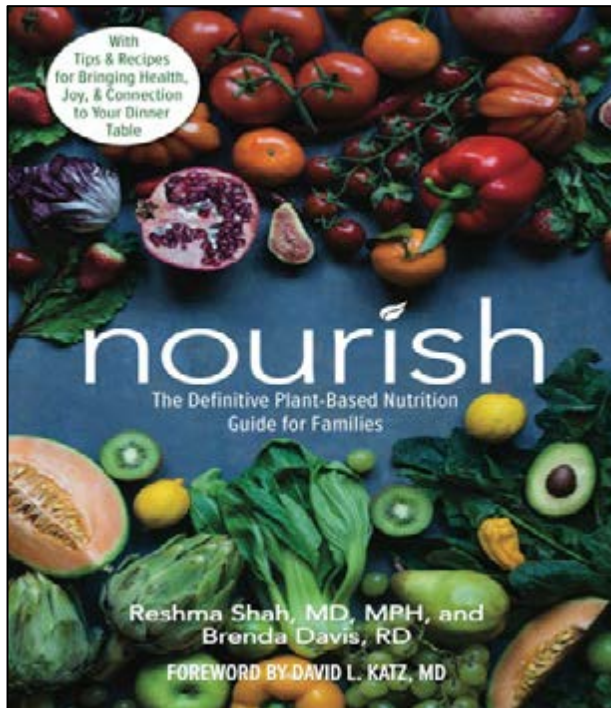
The Definitive Plant-Based Nutrition Guide for Families

By Dr. Reshma Shah



Reshma Shah, MD, MPH was raised as a Jain in the Pittsburgh, PA area and is currently a board-certified pediatrician and adjunct instructor at Stanford University School of Medicine. She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Johns Hopkins University and her medical degree from Drexel University College of Medicine. She lives in the Bay Area with her husband and two children. Most Sundays, you can find her at the California Avenue Farmers Market in Palo Alto where she finds inspiration for weekly family meals. Website: reshmashahmd.com Instagram: @reshmashah

Dr. Reshma Shah co-authored “[Nourish: The Definitive Plant-Based Nutrition Guide for Families](#)” with Brenda Davis. The following is based on an excerpt from the book breaking the myth that we need to eat dairy foods, with minor editing by Dr. Jina Shah, Chair of the Ahimsa Eco-Vegan Committee of JAINA to address the Jain community.



Most of us were conditioned to believe that “milk does the body good,” but the science to support this contention is weak. In 2020, Harvard researchers released a comprehensive review on milk and health. They looked at the current evidence as it relates to growth and development, bone health and fracture risk, body weight and obesity, blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, allergies and intolerance, and total mortality. Overall, dairy compared favorably with processed and red meat, but not so favorably with plant-protein sources such as nuts.

There is no question that cow’s milk is a concentrated source of calcium, with about 300 mg per cup of milk. Cow’s milk is high in calcium because it is designed to promote the growth of small baby calves into full grown cows in short order.

However, declaring the milk of one species of mammal essential for the health of another species defies rationality. Humans have no more requirement for cow’s milk than they have for moose milk, which incidentally, is about twice as concentrated in calcium as cow’s milk

So, why does the American government recommend three 8-ounce glasses a day for all those nine years of age or older, and two to two and a half cups for younger children? The primary justification is that milk and milk products will help meet needs for calcium, and that by doing so, it will contribute to bone health and reduced risk of bone fractures.

While calcium is an important nutrient, we do not need to consume dairy to meet our calcium requirements. Prior to the advent of animal husbandry, humans averaged an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 mg calcium without a single drop of cow’s milk. Even today, it is possible to obtain sufficient calcium without cow’s milk, as people manage to do in cultures that consume little or no dairy. As for bone health, dairy intake does not seem to be a very reliable predictor of osteoporosis or bone fractures. In fact, some of the highest rates of hip fractures occur in countries with the highest dairy intakes, while some of the lowest rates are found in countries with the lowest dairy intakes. While this does not prove that dairy causes osteoporosis, it is a pretty good indication that dairy is not necessary for strong bones. Non-dairy sources of calcium include fortified plant-based milks and orange juice, kale, broccoli, tofu, nuts and seeds (almonds, sesame seeds), and beans.

While dairy consumption is common among many healthy populations, there are potential downsides of dairy. Approximately 70 percent of the global

population is lactose-intolerant, with the highest rates occurring in people of African, Asian, and South American descent. Lactose intolerance can cause abdominal pain, bloating, gas, diarrhea, and nausea. International comparisons suggest dairy consumption is correlated with prostate, breast, and other cancers, which may be driven by Insulin Growth Factor -1 (IGF-1). Additionally, the richest dietary sources of saturated fats are full-fat dairy products such as butter, cheese, creams, full-fat milk, full-fat yogurt, ice cream, and prepared foods such as pizza, macaroni and cheese, and dairy desserts.

Why have Indians been conditioned to believe that milk is necessary for children to grow up healthy and strong? Somehow Indian vegetarians have been convinced that milk is a beneficial food, even as Indians become more obese, with higher rates of diabetes and heart disease at younger ages than ever before.

Just as with adults, kids do not require dairy in the diet for normal growth, development, and well-being.



Plant-based sources of dairy can not only provide necessary protein and calcium, but they have the added benefit of providing fiber and phytonutrients while being low in saturated fats, all of which promote metabolic health. Additionally, dairy can have some specific adverse health effects on children including milk intolerance and allergy, atopic disease (asthma, eczema, allergies), colic, and constipation.

Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons to remove dairy from the diet is the incredible suffering endured by dairy cows, not to mention [the devastating toll that animal agriculture takes on our planet](#). As Jains if our primary ethical principle is ahimsa, we must understand the violence involved in

production of dairy products and refrain from consuming them. It is undeniable that these animals suffer. Cows only produce milk for their offspring, and



cows, just like humans, have a strong maternal instinct. Sadly, dairy cows have their baby calves taken away after birth, and the milk that was meant for their baby is mass produced for human consumption. According to Farm Sanctuary, “cows used by the dairy industry are intensively confined, continually impregnated, and bred for high milk production with little concern for their well-being.” The vast majority of dairy comes from factory farms, and when the cows are no longer able to produce milk (after about 5 years, whereas the normal lifespan of a cow is roughly 20 years), they are eventually slaughtered for meat. This is true for organic, grass-fed, and pasture-raised dairy cows as well. If we can meet our calcium and other nutritional requirements by consuming plant-based sources of calcium and it prevents wide scale suffering of animals and worsening of the climate crisis, it certainly makes sense to take dairy off our plates.



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Here is a family friendly recipe to get you started.

These protein-rich energy balls are high in calcium, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids. Add a tablespoon of fresh grated ginger for a flavor boost, if desired. If you prefer, roll in hemp seeds, coconut, or a mix of seeds.

Molasses Tahini Energy Balls

Ingredients

- 1 cup walnuts
- 1/4 cup hemp seeds
- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 1/4 cup tahini
- 1/4 cup almond butter
- 1/4 cup organic blackstrap molasses
- 1/2 cup sunflower or pumpkin seeds (or a combination)
- 1 cup dates, tightly packed (soak in hot water for 15–30 minutes to soften, if hard)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract or 1/2 teaspoon of vanilla powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 to 5 tablespoons sesame seeds (raw or roasted)



Instructions

- In a food processor, coarsely chop walnuts and sunflower/pumpkin seeds. Pour into a bowl.
- Process dates, tahini, almond butter, blackstrap molasses, and vanilla in the food processor until it forms a smooth dough.
- Add hemp seeds, chia seeds, and walnut mixture to the dough and pulse just until nuts and seeds are distributed through the dough—don't over-process.
- With a spatula, put the dough into a bowl. If it is sticky, place in the fridge for an hour or more for easier handling.

- Form into 1-inch balls. Roll in sesame seeds. Refrigerate or freeze.

Other Resources/Important Links

For references, please see Dr. Reshma Shah's book: <http://nourishthebook.com/>

Spiritual, health, ecological reasons to go vegan, nutritious recipes and interviews with Jain sadhvis, sadhus, and laypeople: <https://veganjains.com/>

Scientific literature, organized by topic: <https://www.plantbaseddata.org/>

JAINA Ahimsak Eco-Vegan Committee: https://www.jaina.org/page/AhimsakEco_VeganCommittee

Vegan Jain Recipes: <http://www.jainvegans.org/recipes/>

Vegan Recipe Book: [Rainbow Food for the Vegan Palate by Pramodaben Chitrabhanu](#)

Vegan Recipes: <https://pinkispalate.com/category/vegan-2/>

Indian vegan food, modifiable to exclude root vegetables: <https://www.veganricha.com/>
<https://holycowvegan.net/>



[Image credits: <http://sweetpoppyseed.com/>, Animal Aid Unlimited, <https://veganoutreach.org/>, Mittmac and Aksh from Pixabay]

My Motivation in Supporting Jain Studies at UC Davis

By Mrs. Mohini Jain

[Mrs. Mohini Jain Presidential Chair was established at the University of California, Davis, in 2016 with a \$1 Million contribution by Mrs. Jain.]



Establishing a university chair for the advancement of Jainism has been my desire, my dream for the coming generation, and an expression of my Jain values.

Since immigrating to the US in 1973, I became aware of how underrepresented and misunderstood Jainism is in this country. First, many people have been and still are unaware that Jainism is a religion. Second, of the few who had heard of it, many did not know the core principles or had misconceptions about them. Finally, there was a dearth of resources available to inform people about Jainism, most notably at universities where Jainism courses were not offered. All of these factors led me to realize that Jains ourselves must champion our own history. The tremendous social and professional contributions we have made are diminished if people do not know about Jainism.

I decided that academic study of Jainism would be the most impactful, and that UC Davis would be the best fit because of their strong department of religious studies and my long association with the university. In 2013, I started looking at the department's curricula and noticed there were multiple faculty members and courses dedicated to most Indian religions but none for Jainism. This lack of recognition, despite Jainism being the oldest religion in India, strengthened my resolve to fill this gap. Thus, the Jain chair was established at UC Davis in 2016, and Jainism is now part of the curriculum with a faculty member dedicated to the study and teaching of Jainism.

Nothing in my life so far has given me more satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment than establishing this chair.

INFORMATION

Popat Savla: A Humble Love Affair with Life

(Source: ServiceSpace.org Blog - Posted by Nipun Mehta on Oct 5, 2020)



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

Both of us drove up together to a holy site, somewhere on the hills of Los Angeles. Except it was Sunday. And this shrine of the revered India mystic, Yogananda, is closed on Sundays.

"If it's closed, why are we going there?" I asked my friend. "Who knows, maybe it'll open. Not all gates open by man-made rules." Okay, I can dig that. We arrived, and sure enough, the giant gate was closed and there was absolutely no human in sight. "Well, we tried," I stated. With his usual jokester smile, my friend replied with a Zen koan: "Surrender works only after full effort." He got out of the car. I stayed back, since I wasn't quite sure how the 50 feet walk between the car and the front gate would change anything.

Lo and behold, right as he beelines for the shuttered gate, a nun comes out of nowhere, appearing to walk in at the same time. I couldn't believe my eyes! Still, this is a public place (where George Harrison's funeral was held), and no one is just going to open it up for two random visitors. Yet, much to my jaw-dropping amazement, she opened the place for just the two of us. It defied all logic. The entire 10-acre Lake Shrine, just the two of us. Amidst the sacred ambiance of Yogananda and lush natural beauty, we walked in silence and sat in meditation. It all felt pre-ordained somehow, as if my friend was one divine hoodwink ahead of the rest of us.

That friend was Popat Savla. He just passed away.

If this were just one episode, I might've chalked it off to happenstance. With Popat Uncle, though, it was a regular affair. Always a lover of pithy lines, I can hear him saying: "I don't believe in miracles. I rely on them."

Anyone who actually walked in his shoes might've felt the same way. He grew up sleeping on the streets of India, studying at night under streetlights, becoming the exemplary public school kid who always got scholarships. "Then I married my good luck charm," he would share with a sheepish smile, about his life-

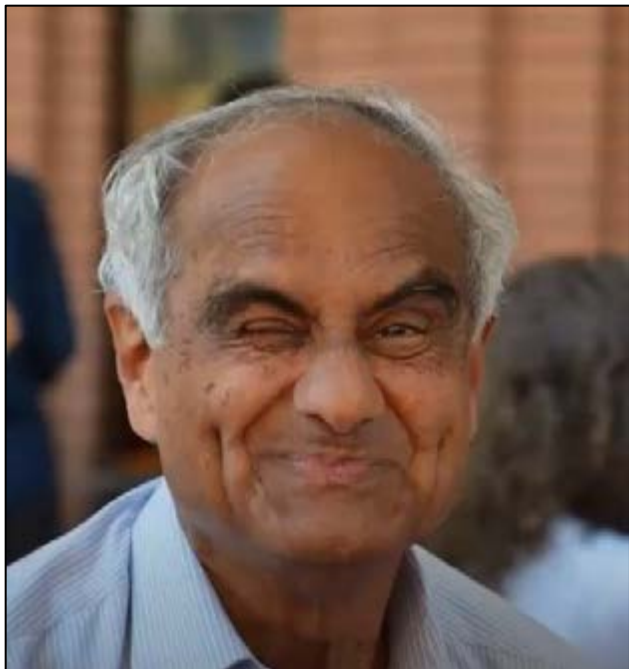
long marriage with Kalpana Aunty. You could tell how much they cared for each other, because right after his sweet comment, he felt very comfortable throwing in a joke: "But, you know about the three rings of marriage? Engagement ring, wedding ring, and suffering." Not to be outdone, Kalpana Aunty would retort with her crackled laugh, "I agree."



Life was generous to Popat Uncle, and he was generous back to life. He immigrated to the US as an engineer, dabbled in real estate, and at a specific turning point in his life, in the 90s, he consciously dedicated his life to service. Our paths intersected soon after that.

We met in a rather peculiar way. ServiceSpace had just started, and we were interviewing nonprofits who wanted us to build them a website. Popat Uncle was a volunteer with one of those nonprofits. As volunteers accepted and completed the project, Popat Uncle intuitively felt that something was different here. At that time, we hardly had any history, and yet, he felt an inexplicable affinity with our radical

guiding principles -- particularly of operating without any fundraising. Then, in 2001, a major earthquake hit India, epi-centered in Kutch, where he was from. We ended up speaking at 1AM, before his 4AM flight to ground zero, to brainstorm ideas for earthquake relief. The website we created ended up going quite viral, attracting millions of visitors.



Yet, the projects seemed to be a side-show in the face of our deepening friendship. As a twenty-something at the time, I spoke to him about my ambivalence of quitting my job and jumping head-first into service. To all my insecurities, he would be an unflinching votary of unconditional trust in life. "Don't listen to the elders. You can see where we have ended up," he would say. **"Go on and chart a new path. Listen to your heart."**

An invisible halo of fearlessness always swirled around Popat Uncle. Just like opening that gate at Lake Shrine, he had an inexplicable audacity in knowing that nature will adjust its sails to the winds of a selfless intent.

Everyone wanted him on his team. Because of his fearlessness, nonprofits would often ask him to approach big-name funders and celebrities. It's not that he had the aura of a slick salesman. Hardly so. His shtick was far, far simpler: he would just walk to the front door, even if it was the country's prime minister or the richest man in India, and trust that the gate would open. For him, it somehow did open.

Yet, **the flavor of his courage wasn't of the "I have nothing to lose" variety, but rather "I have nothing to gain."** That alchemically elevated others into their higher instinct.

His front-line efforts, deep love of the common man, and utter trust in life, allowed many contagions of compassion to form around him. Many dozens of grassroots nonprofits would cite him as their favorite ambassador. Post 2001 earthquake, a US senator gave \$20M to a coalition that Popat Uncle had pioneered. Yet for him, it was a daily affair to serve the sacred in the mundane.

He rarely recounted his indirect impact on countless lives. Instead, he told stories like this:

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/204658214>

Together with Kalpana Aunty, they have supported thousands of people in small ways and big. When you get Popat Uncle in his engineering mindset, he would even be prone to precise algorithms: "We have always tried to serve those reaching for the divine: monastics, artists, and nonprofits." For instance, legends of Indian classical music -- Ravi Shankar, Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Zakir Hussain -- have played (and stayed!) in their house. Such performers don't normally do house concerts, but they would often deliver their most inspired performances in that home. "Something about the ambiance," each of them would say. Their home was host to so many events that almost every group coined their own nickname. Ironically, it is on Lotus Avenue.

For ServiceSpace, especially, that home was always open. Several times over the years, maybe 10-15 of us would head over and put out sleeping bags all over their living room, organize bathroom schedules, and happily turn their weekend plans into cooking frenzies. Practically every time I would be in the area, we would host a spontaneous Awakin Circle with 30-50 local friends. Last time I was there, in 2019, it just so happened to be Kalpana Aunty's birthday. On some trips when that wasn't feasible, I would still show up at 11PM at night, and depart at 7AM -- because we all felt like family. Our midnight conversations would typically end with Popat Uncle eventually retiring with some quip like, "You know that sleeping on the floor is the best way to connect with Mother Earth." (Indeed, he would often sleep on the floor, even in the later parts of his life.)

Apart from those visits, we didn't talk often. Yet, he frequently reiterated that our connection was cosmic.

INSPIRATION

CONTRIBUTION

Perhaps it was, because whether it was my wedding or the turning points in his spiritual journey, our lives invariably ended up intersecting at the most opportune moments.

I most admired Popat Uncle's capacity to be a kingly giver. Although he was so deeply attuned to the plight of the world, he didn't give out of sympathy. Like a king, he gave because it was in his nature to give. Once, I got an unexpected call from him: "I was at this event, and at the end, they were raising some money around a 30-year vision they had. I was just silently sitting when I saw a banner with today's date. I realized it was my mother's birthday. I remembered how she had sold her only piece of jewelry so I could pay the application fee for a college scholarship. Everything I am today is because of her." In her honor, he quietly went up, wrote the biggest donation check of his life, and walked out.

It wasn't calculated, nor was it for creating external impact. An overflow of gratitude, where the branch tips paid homage to its roots and the river started blending into the sea. **"My mother taught me that what you can't give away was never yours to begin with,"** he told me that day. Only a couple people ever knew about his anonymous act.

When Popat Uncle came to one of our retreats in 2018, he ended up on a small cot in a dorm. Unfortunately, so did many mosquitoes. In the morning, I saw his face full of mosquito bites. To my petrified look, particularly as a host, he laughed and simply said, "I was practicing generosity last night. I offered my blood to the mosquitoes." That was the last he ever said anything of it.

That was Popat Uncle. A kingly giver who lived fearlessly in the womb of nature's love.

Before we met, Popat Uncle and Kalpana Aunty got into a disastrous car accident when a drunk driver hit them. They had to be flown into a hospital, and it was unclear if they would even survive. It was in that helicopter that he promised himself, "If I live, I'll spend my remaining days in service." Rather miraculously, they both got away with just a small surgery. And he stuck to his word. When they returned home from the hospital and checked their mail, they saw an inconspicuous postcard from a hermit they had hosted many moons ago. It mysteriously read:

"God has given you a second chance."

God gave all of us a second chance too.



Popat Uncle, thank you. You have blessed so many of us, since our very first encounter. I'll miss our above-speed-limit car rides, shuttling from one event to another listening to Osho lectures. I'll remember your Mullah Nasruddin stories. Your deadpan jokes. How you still referred to ServiceSpace as "CharityFocus". Your loving presence at JAINA events, when you'd be sitting right in the front row unconditionally cheering me on. The sparkle in your eyes, when you spoke of the generosity of those who have the least. Classical music that would spontaneously turn on. How you'd always stuff some random offering in my pocket, like my grandmother, every time we parted ways -- including the last time we met. Your indefatigable conviction in the good. Your humble love affair with life.

May your incredible virtues find a stronger home in my heart, and may I keep nurturing the symphony of vibrations that you have revealed.

Even in your passing, you gifted us a reminder of this parable: A Salt Doll gingerly steps to the shore, inquiring about the nature of the sea. The sea invites her to touch it. As she gingerly takes a step forward, she repeats: "But who are you?" Now, losing parts of herself, she continues forwards, and in the end, exclaims: "It is I!"



Inspiring Life of Trevor Noah

By Reena Shah



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

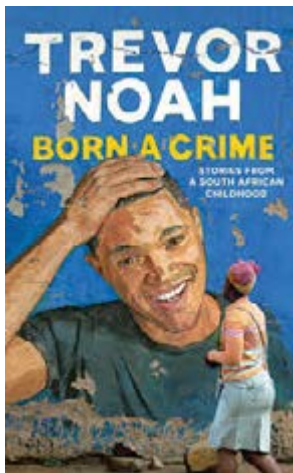
**“My whole life, comedy has been a tool I’ve used to process pain. And you’ve seen how we live in Soweto.”
- Trevor Noah to Oprah Winfrey**

The life of Trevor Noah, the host of “The Daily Show” on Comedy Central, is an incredible story of a mixed-race boy growing up in poverty amidst the ruthless oppression of apartheid South Africa who ended up entertaining the American public and the world at one of the popular TV institutions. He is one of the most popular faces in media who has developed an immense amount of compassion and humor while growing up in a rough environment.

Noah has received various accolades, including a Primetime Emmy Award win from nine nominations. He was named one of “The 35 Most Powerful People in New York Media” by The Hollywood Reporter in 2017 and 2018. In 2018, Time magazine named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world. In April 2018, he set up the Trevor Noah Foundation, a Johannesburg-based non-profit organization that equips orphans and vulnerable youth with the education, life skills, and social capital necessary to pursue further opportunities.

This article is an attempt to look at snippets from his life and trace the inspirational qualities of a soul that transcends human barriers of race, religion, and color.

Noah was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1984. With a Black mother and white, Swiss father, he was, as he wrote in his bestselling 2016 autobiography, **Born a Crime**. Under apartheid laws, which officially governed South Africa between 1948 and 1994, race was the country’s defining cultural and legal factor. The “Mixed Marriages Act of 1949” banned marriage between white people and people of color and other



laws enacted early in the regime prohibited people of different races from even living near one another.

Despite the hardships that he and his family faced in Africa, he grew up to be quite popular in South Africa with his sense of humor. He eventually came to America to be the successor of Jon Stewart on “The Daily Show”, one of the most famous talk shows. According to Jain philosophy, where and in which family we are born is part of our destiny (karma). But what we make out of it through hard work and *purusharth* sets one apart and puts one on the path of progression.

Developing Fearlessness

Noah’s mother, Patricia and her mother, Nomalizo Frances Noah, raised him in the black township of Soweto during this tumultuous era in South Africa. Noah writes about one such dangerous situation in his book *Born a Crime*, when he had to jump out of the car to save himself; “He raced along Oxford Road, the lanes empty, no other cars out. I was sitting closest to the minibus’s sliding door. My mother sat next to me, holding baby Andrew. She looked out the window and then leaned over and whispered to me, ‘Trevor when he slows down at the next intersection, I’m going to open the door and we’re going to jump.’”

Noah and his mom ran away from a man who might have killed them if they didn’t have courage to jump out of the car and run. It was an inspiration to read that even amidst such a situation, the two “started laughing ... and we stood there, ... our arms and legs covered in blood and dirt, laughing together through the pain in the light of a petrol station on the side of a road in the middle of the night.”

He had a tough childhood but still learned to have the courage to laugh through the pain. How many of us can laugh through our traumas? It requires a fearless soul to be able to come out of this smilingly.

INSPIRATION

Acceptance through Humor

Even when apartheid's grip was weakening, he spent his early years always in hiding. His grandmother would keep him locked when he was living in Soweto as police could show up anytime. Even when he was out with his mother, his mother would often pretend to be a stranger or someone other than his mother as it was the only way to be together outside without the authorities bothering a biracial child. His mother would be sent to jail several times if she visited Noah's dad in white neighborhood. Most of his adolescence was spent in what he refers to as "the hood" in his memoir. He didn't have the money for college tuition, so he hustled for all the cash he could get — Noah DJ'd and did some odd jobs to earn a living.

In one of his interviews with Oprah Winfrey, he admitted to the fact "being poor sucks, but being poor together makes it a lot better. My family had something that sometimes you don't have when you have too much—the ability to focus on the human beings around you. We had each other, so we laughed".

This is such a powerful statement of his humor, depth, sincerity, and truth. The qualities of a soul extend beyond a religion, class, color, ethnicity. The ability to bear the pain and suffering with such equanimity and humor is rare and inspirational.

Lesson in Compassion and Forgiveness

Under apartheid legislation, Noah's mother was classified as Black, and his father was classified as White. Noah himself was classified as colored. At the time of his birth, his parents' interracial relationship was illegal under apartheid law (which Noah highlights this in his autobiography). Noah's mother did not marry his father. Interracial sexual relations and marriages were not decriminalized until a year after Noah's birth, when the Immorality Act was amended in 1985.

In 1992, Noah's mother, Patricia Nombuyiselo married Ngisaveni Abel Shingange. Shingange physically abused both Trevor and his mother, and the couple legally divorced in 1996. In 2009, after Patricia married Sfiso Khoza, Shingange shot Noah's mother in the back of the head. The bullet narrowly missed her brain, which spared her life. It was a devastating event, made worse by the fact that the stepfather then tried to hunt down Noah himself.

"I remember after the shooting, my mother was in the hospital, and all I felt was rage," Noah recalled to a

magazine in 2017. "My mother said to me, 'Don't hate him for doing this, but rather pity him because he too is a victim, in his own way, of a world that has thrust upon him an idea of masculinity that he has subscribed to and is now a part of. As for myself, I do not wish to imbue myself with a hatred that only I will carry.'"

What an immense lesson in compassion taught by an African mother to her son! Giving up *kashaay* to understand the plight of the sinner requires certain amount of understanding, awareness, and maturity to be able to forgive. It took a while for him to understand what his mother was really saying, but he ultimately came around to the message.

Demonstrating Humility and Integrity

Noah credits his mother as the moral center of his life; she taught him how to be decent, how to be funny and how to combine those two in order to ascend to the heights he has now reached.

"I thought that I was the hero of my story, [but] in writing it I came to realize over time that my mom was the hero," Noah told NPR with reference to his book. "I was lucky enough to be in the shadow of a giant. My mom's magic dust sprinkled on me and I hope I have enough of it to be as brave as she was and continues to be."

Trevor Noah's humility and lack of doer-ship of his life (akartaa bhaav) is profound and inspirational.



Fast forward to life of comedian, when Noah was touring the world for the first time doing comedy, his lifelong dream, he received a phone call that showed an American number, and a voice said,

"Hi, can I speak to Trevor Noah? This is Jon Stewart."

Noah did not think it was the Jon Stewart, so he said, "Jon Stewart from...?"

"Oh, sorry, I am the host of *The Daily Show* in America. I'm a big fan of your comedy. Would you like to come to America, pop into the show, and hang out?"

And Noah said No!

Noah knew he would have to cancel shows if he went to New York. People had bought tickets to come see him in London. He didn't take his fans for granted. His integrity did not let him disappoint his fans (knowing that their support was colossal in reaching where he was at that point in life) even if the host from the famous talk show from America called him. No wealth or fame could attract him to give up what he was doing when he received the call.

Jon said, "Well, when you do come to New York, look me up and let's hang out."

And a year and a half later, that's what Noah did.

In his interview with Oprah, he said,

"...I come from a world where there was no chance for me. Every chance I've taken is the one that's impossible." He values his life and what life taught him. A life of satisfaction and respect!

His sincere response to Oprah about his intention with *The Daily Show* was not just about being funny on the show. He feels "that the truth is where the funny lies. For [him], in pursuing the funny, [he] pursued the truth. [He is] somebody who loves engaging in the news, discussing ideas, engaging in debate.

He does consider his show to be a catharsis for him and the people watching. "Sometimes it's a place for us to enjoy laughter. Sometimes it is a place for us to learn. I've realized there is no fixed point. I'm aiming for true north, but it's shifting with the tide. I'm constantly trying to keep the boat where it needs to go versus where I thought it should go."

His pursuit of truth and truthfulness and to go with the flow rather than trying to change the flow of life are one of the many tenets of Jainism.

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"We tell people to follow their dreams, but you can only dream of what you can imagine, and, depending on where you come from, your imagination can be quite limited."

Trevor Noah – Born a Crime

INSPIRATION

How Do I Achieve Peace of Mind?

By Dr. Robert Puff, Ph.D.



*Dr. Robert Puff, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist, author, international speaker, and meditation expert who has been counseling individuals, families, nonprofits, and businesses for over twenty years. A contributing writer to Psychology Today, he has authored numerous books, including *Spiritual Enlightenment: Awakening to the Supreme Reality* and creates a weekly podcasts and articles on enlightenment, spiritual enlightenment, nonduality, Advaita Vedanta at: <http://www.EnlightenmentPodcast.com>*

(This article was originally published at enlightenmentpodcast.com.)

People around the world are seeking peace of mind. The field of psychology in which I trained is all about helping people arrive at and achieve peace of mind.

What I realized very early on in my experience of working with other psychologists is that they don't arrive at peace of mind. They sometimes experience peaceful moments and psychology is good at getting rid of disturbing thoughts; but experiencing peace that passes all understanding is something that psychology isn't very good at.

Psychology taught me things, but it didn't teach me how to have peace beyond the mind. That's where it – and so many things around the world – end up failing. They seek peace in that which is naturally disturbed – the mind.

What happens is that shortly after we're born, around the age of two or three, we start having pleasurable and unpleasurable experiences. The mind remembers these and then tries to hold onto the pleasurable ones while preventing the bad ones. The problem exists in duality. If there is always to be good, there also has to be bad. To be able to smell a rose you have to know what manure smells like. You have to have two if you want to emphasize one. You can't just have emphasis on one unless you describe it or put it in comparison to its opposite.

The mind comes along and says "Hey, I'm going to find you peace, bliss and happiness. Just let me be in charge and I'll find it for you in this dualistic world." This is impossible because where there is pleasure, pain is going to follow shortly. The most extreme form of this is drug addiction. Drug addicts will sell their souls in order to get their drug. In the process of trying to get that incredible high, their lives are putrid beyond belief. They might end up in prison, they might steal

or get involved in prostitution, or hurt people. In the process of seeking that super high they receive super lows. It's the same with manic depression or bipolar. Once the bipolar person likes that manic experience, they chase after it, but what follows is the low.

Psychology, philosophy and religions have come along and said, "Hey, we'll give you a formula that will work. It will get you to have lots of highs and very little lows." Or they say, "At least, someday you'll have just highs when you die," such as in the case of some religions. But what they don't do is give you peace. They might be able to give you temporary cessation of disturbance but mind, in and of itself, is disturbance. It's impossible to have peace of mind because the mind is dualistic; it is based on good and bad, happiness and pain. Since it's seeking pleasure and shunning pain, it suffers. Its natural state is one of disturbance, because once there is a cessation of disturbance, disturbance is going to come because that's a state of mind. It's in a constant state of flux.

Even if peace of mind is reached, sooner or later pain is going to come along and disturb that peace of mind. We all know this. It doesn't work to find peace of mind in the mind because the mind can't find peace. So, is it hopeless? Is there nothing we can do but suffer while we're here?

No, of course not. But to find peace, we have to seek it so deeply and earnestly that we're willing to give up all our thoughts that are misconceived. All of them. We don't hang onto them just because we're told they're true or because we feel they're true. We only hang onto that which is permanently everlasting true, right here & right now.

But what is that? That which changes can't be the ultimate truth. What is it that doesn't change? What is

consistent? What always is, from the day we're born 'til now and 'til the day we die? There is only one thing and that's our awareness or beingness.

Pure beingness in the present moment without concepts or thoughts is about stepping back beyond our thoughts and abiding in pure witnessing. What happens when we do this is that boundaries get lost. We can't distinguish between ourselves and everything else, so we and the entire universe become one. We become a witness. There isn't any more "I" and "thou." We aren't a person; rather, we're everything that is because we're aware of it. Because we're aware of it, it is. That's the only thing that we can be aware of.

Pure beingness, pure witnessing, right here and right now. There is no past, no future, only the present moment. That's it. When we abide in that awareness, what happens is that there is peace. There is deep peace because we're not trying to hang onto certain things or push other things away. We just witness what's happening. Of course, there will be a response to pain and pleasure, but there won't be a grasping. Vast, elaborate stories won't be created, and we won't constantly be pursuing or regularly fearing that which may or may not come true. We just flow with life and we find that our natural state is one of peace.

But it's not peace of mind – it is peace of pure beingness because we don't grasp and try to hold onto things. We don't fear things. We just witness life unfolding and it's beautiful. There are no concepts; it's more like a childlike awareness of newness. It is newness every day because we step beyond the mind. We find that our natural, true self is one of peace. It is a peace that truly surpasses all understanding. Let us be that; let us abide in our true self, that is our eternal or supreme self. Let us be who we are, who we've always been and who we will always be.

[Note by Ramesh Khandhar, Editor, Transformation Section]

Dr Puff has described a simple and effective method of achieving everlasting peace. The Jain doctrine describes similar approach with more insight.

The mind exists and thrives on psychic bond with all external material objects. The thought is in inner world and the physical object is outside. Our thought

does not affect the object in any shape or form. It is the mind which believes that object might bring happiness or misery. This gives rise to guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness and all forms of nonforgiveness. The future expectation makes it worse by causing unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry etc. The innate quality of pure self is lost into our search for peace and happiness in the mundane world.

This ongoing problem cannot be solved at the same level it is created. The disturbance caused by duality of mind cannot be eliminated at the mind level. We have to go beyond mind to seek the everlasting peace. If the inner awareness does not attend to any thought created by mind, then the thought will lose its momentum and simply disappear. It will continue to exist and create emotion only if our awareness interacts with it. This inner awareness is a transcendental dimension of consciousness which is not subject to karmic cycle. In presence of awareness, the thought will not be able to create the strong emotions disturbing our tranquility and inner peace. In short, this awareness transcends the mind. It allows us to see the activity as silent observer. That's why just being aware and nonreactive is so powerful.

We are just the witness, the knower and seer which are inherent attributes of True-Self. The psychic bond with material world will start to disappear. The more we practice witnessing the thought, the awareness gets purer and concentrated. Ultimately, we develop a 'no mind' state enjoying the everlasting peace, the innate quality of pure self. We can continue to enjoy and live-in material world without having any attachment and staying in witnessing mode. Being rooted in 'being' is essential to be just the watcher of mind and its thought. If we are not careful, thoughts with emotion may once again flood and dilute our power of awareness. Being in a witnessing state of consciousness is a constant and conscious process that requires us to be on guard at all times. With practice, it becomes easier and then becomes natural attribute without any conscious effort.

Dealing with the Past

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

Why do we hold on to the past? Why is it so difficult to let go of experiences that have caused us pain and suffering? We all need to feel certain that we can avoid pain and, ideally, find some comfort in our lives. Moving on from the past also means stepping into the unknown future. It means having the courage to let go of what is familiar and being vulnerable enough to embrace and learn from it.

We carry huge amounts of baggage around from past experiences. Although we go through new experiences every day, the past conditioning significantly influences our perception of events in our life. Many of us go through challenges, frustrations, insecurity, uncertainty, and fear because the past is still present in us. We hold and cherish more hurtful memories, loss of loved ones, financial setback, and health problems. These undesirable and hurtful memories leave deep negative scars in the form of prejudice, anger, hatred, revengeful attitude, fear and insecurity. We habitually focus on what other people did to us and what they could have done for us. For a true spiritual cleansing and renewal, we have to 'let go' of our past.

1. Let Go of the Unpleasant and Hurtful Past

There is nothing we can do to change the past events. We often fail to realize that we are the ones responsible for all of our emotions. Other people are responsible for hurtful actions and insensitive behaviors towards us; however, we are responsible for our attitude and interpretation of our past mistakes and undesirable events. Reflecting and contemplating our mistakes will eliminate the negativity and accept the past without any bias or prejudice. It will empower us to be happy, remain in the present and deal with the present scenario. It will take understanding, spiritual aspiration, wisdom, and continuous practice to erase those hurtful scars. It will provide a seed for positive attributes and practicing in daily life will sprout the seed.

2. Learn to Forgive and Forget

Forgiving isn't about condoning another's behavior; it's about shifting our own perspective. Forgiving others for their wrongdoing is essential for spiritual growth. Blaming others prevents us from going forward. It gives power to someone else and makes

us small. We remain in the negative zone. It is vital to the healing process because it allows us to let go of anger, guilt, shame, sadness, or any other feeling we may be experiencing and move on.

When we truly forgive others, we move from head to heart. Head is very unforgiving; only heart can forgive. It dissolves preconceived notions, animosity, hatred, jealousy, and many other harmful mental stuff.

3. Understand the Law of Karma

Forgiveness must be accompanied by understanding of 'karma theory' that our karma is responsible for all the happening in our life and we are responsible for our mistake of not just witnessing those events in the past. The law of karma and its perfect accuracy in reward-punishment principles will help us to see other people as innocent and only instrumental in our own drama. This 'karmic awareness' will help us to focus on ourselves.

4. Develop Self-Care and Compassion

Many times, we are too tough and criticize ourselves for silly past mistakes and unpleasant events. We should show some kindness, compassion and accept that as part of life. Avoid any comparison with others. Accept the hurt in light of 'karmic awareness' and strong desire to move forward on spiritual growth.

A lot of time we judge our past mistakes through a lens of who we are today. Our current state of wisdom and maturity amplifies the small mistake made with less wisdom and maturity then. This understanding will help us reduce the intensity of haunting the past mistakes.

Do not make the mistake of over-glorifying or overestimating how things really were. It serves no purpose to cling to mundane happy or sad memories. Accept them for what they were and then let them go.

5. Embrace the Present Moment

One of the most effective ways to let go of the past is to be mindful and embrace the present. Instead of reliving the past and getting consumed with negativity, keep yourself active and enjoy the current moment.. Whatever you may be doing, just live in the moment; even if it's just sitting at your desk and watching the clouds roll by or going to the beach and watch the waves. Being in the present will keep you

focused in the activities which will minimize or eliminate the habit of wandering and/or dwelling in the past.

6. Open-up and Confess

A Totally harmful past can be eliminated only if we confess, repent, and transform the hurtful attitudes, such as, prejudice, hatred, aversion, sarcasm, negativism, etc. It helps dissolve and/or transform those vice into gratitude, forgiveness, friendliness, compassion, kindness, politeness, and karmic awareness. It stops our habit to rationalize and justify past mistakes and conditioning. We must not let the unrealistic desires of the past overshadow the 'present' and set ourselves to fail again. Our desires and goals should be realistic to fit the present circumstances.

We must not let the unrealistic desires of the past overshadow the 'present' and set ourselves to fail again. Our desires and goals should be realistic to fit the present circumstances.

It helps open up and talk about past mistakes and natural setbacks to spiritual master and/or good close friend you can trust and can talk to. It alleviates our pain. The master will be able to perceive it impartially and guide us properly in the right direction. Expressing internal noise will help us to sort out and perceive 'what needs to be done' to minimize the adverse impact on the 'present'.

7. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is cultivated through understanding of the innate nature of True Self (pure soul), the karmic awareness, remembering constantly 'I am pure, peaceful, and powerful soul' with awareness that personality is just the temporary garb of present life to play my own drama. This will help us to practice the glad acceptance with conscious response to the happening in our life.

As we cultivate it, we remain peaceful, happy, and loving in all situations. Our presence serves positively to all people around us and in return we are blessed by collective and cosmic consciousness. The more we bring our focus to the present through self-awareness and glad acceptance, the less impact our past or future desire will have on us. Our past habits and hurts will lose its control over our spiritual attitude. It will take us forward and eliminate looking back in the past.

8. Make New memories

Making new memories is better than being stuck in the past. Too many old memories make it more difficult to instill new positive memories in the conscious and subconscious mind. Take up new

hobbies, fill your time so you have no time for idle thoughts about what no longer matters.

Letting go of the past is much more difficult if we are around people who are constantly reminding us about it or put us down. When we surround ourselves with positive people who are committed to growth and progress, we will find it much easier to move on. We should spend our time with like-minded people, do the things that bring us joy and be in the places that bring us peace. We should condition our mind by feeding empowering stories.

Learn a new skill. Meditate. Exercise. Have dinner with a friend. Make a new friend. Make a habit of listening or reading spiritual scriptures or discourses for 1-2 hours and absorb them. This will help develop sanskar, virtues, which will replace negative memories closely linked with negative emotions like anger, hatred or fear. It will raise our consciousness to experience the bliss.

9. Offer Selfless Service

Find something we want to serve that is greater than ourselves. Develop the driving force to go beyond and live for our family, for our community, for humanity. When we realize that we are here not just for receiving but for 'giving' then other people will feel our authenticity and open up to us. The more we offer selfless service, the more our life will improve dramatically, and we will be able to move on from the past.

Giving back reminds us what we are made for. Focusing on the needs of others has a way of empowering us to do more than we thought possible. We feel the benefits immediately and become grounded in the moment. We will learn how to let go of the past and step forward into the future in a more loving, conscious and compassionate way.

Conclusion

There is certainly a danger to our being effective in the present if we live and remain in the past. But the answer is also not to ignore and close our eyes to our pasts. As soon as we move away from negativity, we instantly open ourselves up to the opportunity of attracting positivity. We attract exactly what we put out. Happiness attracts happiness and true love attracts true love.

Through spiritual exercises mentioned here, we learn from our past, eliminate anger, hatred, negativity, etc., become wise and live resilient life.

Who Controls Your Identity?

By Rishi Zaveri



Rishi Zaveri lives in Detroit and is a software engineer at Salesforce. He is a proud member of the Jain Society of Greater Detroit. rishizaveri1994@gmail.com

I recently came home from work one evening and found that I had received mail from Kohl's. I opened it up to find an invoice for nearly \$1000 on a Kohl's Charge card under my name. Supposedly, I spent \$900 dollars one evening at Kohl's a couple of months earlier and had not paid it off. Thus, I also owed Kohl's a late fee. The problem was, I did not even own a Kohl's Charge card! Obviously, my identity had been stolen and someone had created this fraudulent account under my name. Luckily, an investigation by Kohls' determined that this account was fraudulent, and I was not liable to pay the fee.

This got me thinking: "**What is identity?**" There are, of course, many ways to define this, but my thoughts traveled towards the Jain definition of *identity*. I thought about the effects of that identity and how it can be exploited or protected. As I dug deeper, I began to see parallels between the Jain definition of identity and our financial/social identity. The following is just a summary of my thoughts and discoveries. I hope that by the end, you will have a better understanding of what identity really means in Jainism and maybe even learn a little bit about how your credit works!



First, let's think about identity from a financial perspective. When we try to open a new credit card account, there are a few universal pieces of information we must provide: name, address, social security number (SSN), email address, and phone number. This is all information that points towards our true identity, which we would consider our own physical existence. Even though we may think this information is secure and private, someone can get a hold of it by stealing our emails or passwords. If that happens, it becomes harder to prove who is who. One way to catch an identity thief is to look for erratic, destructive, or reckless behavior. Generally, people

act in their best interest, so any action outside of that becomes suspicious. Once we catch the thief, we protect our identifiable data even more and become more alert about who and what gets access to it.

So, what about our **spiritual identity**? According to Jainism, our true existence is not the physical body, but the soul, which resides in the body. But just as we use artificial surrogates as forms of identity in financial situations, there are similar surrogates as proof of our soul in our daily lives. These surrogates are called '*Upayog*'. Simply stated, Upayog is the utilization of our mind, speech, and body. Jainism believes that only a body with a soul can utilize these three and therefore, Upayog is proof of a soul.



Solely based on this, it is hard to imagine how our spiritual identity could be stolen. On the surface it seems like it is completely under our control; it is not possible to give someone or something else our '*Upayog*'- no one else can control our thoughts or actions. In Jainism, the soul wants to direct its Upayog - its attention - towards itself. This is because, for the soul, the soul is enough. What does this mean? Think about our financial identity. To be able to buy food, a car or a house, we need money. To save money, we need a bank account. To create a bank account, we need the proof of identity, proof of residence, and contact information. These are all substitutes for our own identity. If we were able to self-sustain ourselves, then we would not need any of these proofs of identity. Our self would be enough; having an email address or SSN would not make us any more ourselves than we already are. Similarly, the soul is self-sustaining; it is the source of life and bliss itself, so putting our attention elsewhere does not make us any more alive or blissful.

Consequently, **Upayog towards any other substances (Par Dravya) can be considered a case of stolen identity.** Anything outside the soul can mean physical items, people, places, expectations, and circumstances. Then, keeping our identity safe, implies that we must drop all activity, both mental and physical; an impossible task. As long as we have a body and a mind, we have to put our Upayog in things that are not the soul, there is no alternative. Jainism says that the real problem stems from the root of our misplaced Upayog - the reason *why* we misplace our Upayog. We turn our Upayog towards the wrong things because we believe those things to be our identity. We project our identity to things that do not truly belong to us as souls.

Let's consider Instagram. We tie our identities so tightly with our accounts that they have the power to determine our happiness. Getting many likes or nice comments on posts makes us feel good, and getting negative comments makes us judge ourselves and others. This is akin to deciding our worldly existence on the existence of a certain credit account; "If the account exists, I exist. If the account does not exist, I do not exist." This is obviously a ridiculous thought. Similarly, basing our existence on our relationships, jobs, social standing, heritage, intelligence, or possessions is considered a form of ignorance (*Mithyatva*) in Jainism. This false projection of identity spoils our Upayog, wastes our energy, and causes needless *Raag* (attraction) and *Dvesh* (aversion). Instead, if we accept our identity as the soul, our actions will reflect this shift in perspective and we can use our Upayog in constructive ways.

To understand this further, let's extend our metaphor and talk about credit scores. A credit score is used to determine how likely someone is to pay off a debt. More generally, it can be used as a measure of one's financial stability. A spiritual credit score can then be thought of as a measure of one's spiritual stability, or how likely someone is to go to *Moksha*. A financial credit score is created using two main factors - the number of credit accounts, and account activity. We must have a balanced number of credit accounts - too few (limited history) or too many (more liability) can have a negative impact on our credit score. The type and activity of the credit accounts must also be measured so that we do not accumulate too much debt.

We can define spiritual accounts as particular applications of our Upayog. Just as we use our financial identity to create credit accounts, we use our Upayog to create spiritual accounts. As described earlier, if we are convinced that our true identity is the soul, then we will use our Upayog in only certain

ways; we will only open certain accounts, the 'right' accounts for us. These can take the form of *Kriya* (rituals), *Vayyavach* (serving Sadhus and Sadhvis), *Swadhyay* (self-realization through study), *Seva* (service), *Bhakti* (devotion) and many more. As with credit accounts, we should also balance our spiritual accounts, not too few and not too many. Just as important opening the right accounts is, what we do with those accounts is even more critical. We have to 'pay off our debts' by removing our faults, purifying our thoughts, and strengthening our conviction. However, we must always remember the intention behind our Upayog. **If we stray from the belief that we are the soul, then even the right Upayog can become wrong.** Without the proper perspective, rituals become just physical movement, studies become pointless memorization, and service becomes a source of ego. If we do everything right, then we can quicken our spiritual progress.

But what is the use of spiritual progress? What can it give us? A good credit score is only valuable because it can help buy a home, start a business, and go to college. Spiritual progress, in the most basic form, can help us attain peace. It can give us self-confidence and self-dependence. It reveals the immense strength contained within all of us. It burns away the *Kashays* (anger, greed, ego, deceit) that afflict us every day. Eventually, it leads us to *Moksha*, the state of eternal bliss. But this is where the metaphor ends; **while we keep our credit score and credit accounts till our last breath, Moksha is the closing of all accounts and activities.**

This is a difficult topic to grasp right away. The topics of soul and identity in Jain philosophy is complex, and it is not something that I fully understand either. I hope, however, that this attempt provides some insight into what identity really means. If there is one takeaway from this article, it is that we are something separate from our circumstances. Our identity is something much more enduring than our titles, possessions and relationships, all of which are transient and temporary. When you become upset or stressed, think deeply about your situation. You will discover that the source of your unhappiness is because you projected your identity, your existence, where it should not belong. I do not expect you to drop everything and focus only on the soul from now on - even I have not done that - but I urge you to spend some time every day and reflect on who you truly are.

If anything in this article has offended you or gone against the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir, I sincerely ask for forgiveness.

Micchami Dukkadam!

Covid-19 Challenges for the College Students

By Dhairya Shah



Dhairya Shah is a freshman at Nova Southeastern University pursuing a degree in Biology and on track for Direct Osteopathic medicine. He's also a member of the Parasite Awareness Association which takes active efforts to learn about different types of parasites and how they harm us.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges for students at all levels. I would like to share my experience as a first-time student at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) and provide tips on practicing Jain principles during these tough times.



I spent my semester here at home, following an online bind-flex syllabus. The University tried to help me as much as possible, so that I would have no disadvantage over my co-peers who decided to go on campus and it mostly worked out. It was obvious that not everything will be perfect, but the bind-flex model proved to work genuinely well.

While at home I also strived to follow Jainism as much as possible, even without the opportunity to visit the temple every day. This included doing our family's version of the celebration of Diwali by decorating our house with lights and not forgetting the Nirvan Ladoo to Lord Mahavir. In addition, on Thanksgiving, while we ourselves decided not to gather at the temple, me and my brother did the regular Thanksgiving Navkar Jaap ourselves, praying for all the slaughters of the turkeys and asking for forgiveness for the human race's actions. With activities and moments like these, even with the limited entry to the outside world, I strived to do as much good as possible, both in my academics as well as my religion.

Now that I am moving on campus during the second semester, I would like to advise my fellow Jain students who are moving in just like me - please follow the rules that the University has provided to all of you. It is not just for your safety, but for the safety of others as well. For example, our dorm, during the first month of the term, it is required to test and quarantine ourselves. That means we are not allowed to visit or enjoy the company of people in other dorms. These are strict rules meant for our university's bubble environment and other universities have also taken an action similar to Nova. I beg all of you to listen and follow. As Jains it is our responsibility to limit Himsa, or violence, as much as possible and if we ourselves break rules just for a little enjoyment, then we can cause harm or be harmed ourselves and this goes against our main fundamentals. Please bear in mind that parties and gatherings of multiple people should be avoided, even if your friends are going. Do not unintentionally involve yourself in the act of violence by allowing this virus to spread.



As for my Jain parents who are incredibly scared and understandably worried, I would like to inform you that it's ok to allow us to have a chance to experience the campus life. Almost every college and institution has allowed for protective and effective measures to ensure that the students are safe and secure. Almost all require an effective face covering to enter

every part of the campus and have effective testing sites. If the university provides a chance for the students to go there personally, they will have a better learning experience. While I mentioned my bind-flex model working, there were obviously some cases such as labs where the understanding of experiments was hard due to the internet instability and such other cases. Overall, my message for the students is to please follow and practice your university measures, to follow Jainism. And parents, please consider sending your children on campus.

Expanding the Five Jain Anuvratas for the 21st Century

By Mannan Mehta



Mannan Mehta is a junior at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA, where he studies international relations and economics. Mannan writes and edits for the Lehigh student newspaper and in his free time enjoys reading, playing piano, exercising, traveling, and watching Formula 1. He is always striving to learn more and meet likeminded individuals who are motivated to better themselves and those around them.

Modern society moves at a breakneck pace. Characterized by a constant influx of information, fast fashion, fleeting social trends and rapidly advancing technology, what exists today is seemingly gone tomorrow. We are bombarded with stimuli from people trying to pull us in every direction—try this new medicine, for it will cure your every ailment. Buy this device and every task will become easier. Sign up for this program and you will become a certifiable genius. Eat these foods and lose weight without any exercise.

Human life is ephemeral—one day we are young and curious, the next we are old and wise. In the time we are given, how can we maximize our happiness? In an age of endless comfort, how do we continue challenging ourselves and growing? With large numbers of youths moving away from religion, how are Jain values and principles still relevant?



The five Jain vows – *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, *Achaurya*, *Brahmacharya*, and *Aparigraha* - are central tenants of Jainism, providing those who take them a framework for Jain life.

I believe all five vows can be expanded beyond their inherent meanings to help today's youth bring peace and order to the chaos life in the 21st century breeds.

Ahimsa or non-violence is arguably the most fundamental principle we Jains abide by. In addition to practicing it in regard to human beings and animals, however, we must direct non-violence towards our planet. Our culture of mass consumerism has ramifications that stretch far beyond us simply receiving a brown box at our doorstep two days after ordering it. Large amounts of resources are expended to create such goods, expedite delivery and our love for purchasing new things and throwing out old ones fills up our landfills. Greediness drives humans to

seek wealth at any cost, leading to the exploitation of natural resources to the point of scarcity, and ease of travel has allowed us to taint otherwise untouched landscapes. At the same time, however, people have woken up to the fact that new measures are required to keep our planet healthy and habitable.



Conservationists and environmentalists do great work, saving our endangered species and working to make the air healthier and carbon-free. No one needs to give up life in society in favor of hermitage. Movements like #livesimply, however, embrace conscious food consumption, responsible shopping, and conscious traveling to ensure our planet is habitable for the generations that will succeed us, and taking a vow to live by these habits can go a long way in achieving such ends.

Satya, or truth, is more important now than ever. With society preoccupied with social media and a 24/7 news cycle, we must remain wary of what is the truth and what is not. It is very easy to see others' lives on social media and become jealous. Not everything can be accepted at face value to be the truth, and we must learn to discern our own truth from what we read and observe in the press.

At the same time, it is very easy for us to lie to ourselves in order to justify our actions or rationalize our present situation. In order to discover your own truth, start by telling yourself the most truthful narrative possible, whether it is pleasant or not. The truth hurts, which is why we find it so easy to lie to ourselves; we are predisposed to take the path of

least resistance and feel as little pain as possible. Only by always being honest with ourselves about our intentions, values, and actions, can we try to change and grow.



Understanding the world begins with understanding ourselves. Do not focus on the narrative others seek to perpetuate—the only story to focus on is your own because it is the only one you have control over.

Achaurya or non-stealing speaks for itself, however, its meaning can be expanded to apply directly to the 21st century. We often see cases where people try to fashion their lives in others' image, and we have come to value conformity. As difficult as it is, vowing to forge our own path from our own desires rather than following a path someone else has prescribed for us or a path we believe will help us "fit in", will lead to greater happiness, fulfillment and sense of purpose. Don't steal someone else's vision or personal brand; seek to create your own and have your own definition for success. Do not live someone else's life. This should not be confused with drawing inspiration from others, but there is a difference between inspiration and imitation.

Brahmacharya or chastity can be expanded to address today's habit of seeking instant gratification from material things. Most seek some degree of pleasure unless they choose a life of monkhood, and this is OK. Always seeking pleasure, however, dulls the simple aspects of life and rewires our brain's reward system. Hard work is not always fun but to build anything of value, effort is required. By vowing to delay gratification, we can develop the ability and

discipline to complete tough tasks with the understanding that pleasure will abound when we look back on what we have been able to manifest.

The last vow is **Aparigraha** or non-possession. In a world that is far more materialistic than ever before, we have come to define success on how many possessions one has and how much each one costs. In reality, this is a very simplistic view of the world, and leads to dissatisfaction, as there is no indicator for when enough is enough. The only thing we should strive to continue acquiring more of is knowledge.

Of course, this is not to say that renouncing all worldly possessions is for everyone; I certainly would not be ready to give up the creature comforts of my home. The key is recognizing what you are content with.



Would I like to have the latest Bose headphones, a 4K TV and a new car? Sure. There is always something more I could have. But I recognize that these things will not make me a better person and will not significantly improve the quality of my life. Vow to draw a line between whether your acquisitions serve a tangible purpose or whether they are simply bought for the sake of acquiring something new.

No one is perfect and no one will perfectly embody all of these values. As times change, however, *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, *Achaurya*, *Brahmacharya*, and *Aparigraha* prove to have timeless applicability to our lives and even today can lead us on a path to greater happiness and fulfillment. Today's youth can benefit from taking these vows not only for their inherent characteristics but also for the expanded role they play in addressing issues modern life presents.

Jain Values in Practice

By Shrenik Adhir Shah



Shrenik Shah, Private Client Banker for Chase Private Client. His parents are Adhir and Bharati Shah. He grew up in Anaheim, CA. He attended California State University, Fullerton with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He currently serves as Project Lead for Joy of Sharing's food and meal drive. Some of his passions include watching sports, traveling, learning to play golf, and participating in Spartan Races.

Growing up in a Jain household, my parents instilled in me the importance of giving back to our community. Although 2020 has made this task a challenge, I in turn, challenged myself to find a productive way to practice my Jain values via Anukampa despite the restrictions brought on by Covid-19.

In this search, my dad, Adhir Shah, introduced me to a Grocery Drive project that he was involved with in collaboration with the "Joy of Sharing Foundation". What started as a one-day Grocery Drive in May of 2020 soon became a weekly event and blossomed into a successful illustration of the Jain values that I hold so dearly.

Though at times the task at hand seemed overwhelming, the results speak for themselves. Over the course of 2020, collectively with the Joy of Sharing Foundation we provided groceries to 8,700 families. We provided over 50,000 warm meals to people in need. As a team, we managed to provide a silver lining and a small sense of relief to those less fortunate than ourselves. During a most daunting year, donations from selfless volunteers provided 500 blankets, beanies, and gloves so that in turn we could distribute warmth to those in need. We received and handed out 500 toys and 1,000 hygiene kits. In collaboration with local non-profits, we



managed to distribute meals to Long Beach, Norwalk, Artesia, Downtown LA, and surrounding areas.



Though these numbers reflect the masses that we managed to assist, for me, they represent a small sigh of relief to a parent who couldn't make ends meet or a smile on a child who received a brand-new toy, or warmth provided for those unhoused or homeless. For me, they represent absolute selflessness and dedication by countless number of volunteers who stood by me each week.

As team lead, my focus was to work with the Joy of Sharing Foundation and its volunteers to show gratitude to my community. I would oversee logistics, adhere to a budget, provide items to the kitchen team, organize weekly meetings, work with vendors and other non-profit teams, as well as collaborating with other members of the team to bring to life future projects (blanket drives, toy drives, and hygiene kits to name a few). These are just some of the tasks I tackled on a weekly basis all with one goal in mind: *giving back thru compassion.*

I am grateful to all our volunteers and look forward to our continued success in 2021!

None of this would be possible without BU Patel and his family, founders of Joy of Sharing Foundation.

For more information about local non-profit we work with or how you can help, volunteer, or donate please visit: www.josfcenter.org

Maskhaman: A Beautiful Journey

Some of the life's eventful experiences cannot be fully articulated and shared in the form of words. They just need to be experienced to be known. Moreover, similar efforts can be perceived and experienced differently by different individuals. Jain Digest came to know about one seeker who had done 'Maskhaman' during Paryushan of 2020 and wanted to find out more about his experience in taking on such a challenge. Here are some highlights of the conversation. The seeker has requested to keep this anonymous.

JD: Congratulations on doing such an arduous Tapasya as Maskhaman which you refer to as a beautiful journey. How did you decide to do it?

Seeker: Thanks. I had not planned it. It started spontaneously on one early morning with no clue on the night before that such a journey would be embarked upon. There was no numeric goal in mind, no desire or goals of fame, body weight loss, testing will power, thrill of overcoming a challenge, etc. It was purely led by curiosity, complete surrender, and a never before incremental experience. The journey kept building one hour and one day at a time based on an inner divine calling without any destination in mind.

JD: That's wonderful. Did you have a religious upbringing that helped you?

Seeker: Yes. My engagement with religious Gurus and the values given to me by my parents played an important foundational role for this event to get triggered in my life. It is my belief that feelings to embark on such a journey are triggered by years of sporadic time to time engagement & blessings of gurus and spiritual environment experienced during the course of life. Once triggered the feelings and the journey was led and sustained by a divine power.

JD: In addition to parents and Gurus, in which way did the teachings of Jain religion helped you?

Seeker: The beauty of Jain religion is that it encourages us to observe and learn from experiments – aided by the intellectual knowledge provided by the Tirthankars through the Agams, professed over centuries by the Acharyas / Upadhyayas / Sadhus & Sadhvi's, the world and its ecosystem including the body and mind as the laboratory and equipment, the divine as the conductor and our soul identity as the observer and experienter. Human bodily life is a wonderful

opportunity to discover and experience the beauty of the identity soul, and its ever-present connectivity to the larger divine power.

JD: Did the COVID-19 Pandemic make it harder for you to do the Tapasya?

Seeker: Actually, it helped. Due to the lockdown during the Pandemic, it was possible for me to remain completely cut off from the world other than immediate family members living in the same household. This made it possible to stay in long periods of meditative silence which enabled inner exploration and uninterrupted periods of bliss without distraction.

JD: Do you think attitude plays an important role in doing such Tapasya successfully?

Seeker: Certainly. If done with the right attitude, intent, and conduct; Maskhaman or any form of Tapasya can be one of the most blissful life transforming experience of human life. For me, practicing the art of meditation for several months before, aided in the non-judgmental meditative observation and knowing of the journey. The journey was beautiful because of the spontaneity and the mindful non-judgmental, non-goal oriented attitude.

JD: What were your feelings after you completed your journey?

Seeker: On the day of the 'Parna' (fast breaking day), there was a realization that the journey has not ended, instead the experience was a preparation for a long journey to get started, with glimpses of the sample of fruits that could be realized along the way as a motivational force. The body, mind and soul was filled with an enormous ocean of energy to aid in embarking on the new journey.

Simultaneously, there was a gradual re-engagement with the regular worldly affairs and the instinctive inclination to resort to old life body and mind habits. Additionally, there was a worldly expectation and pull to get back to the 'old normal' – the pre Maskhaman way of life.

JD: What can you tell us more about getting back to 'normal' life after such a Tapasya?

Seeker: As one battles with the chasm between the 'enlightened normal' experienced for few days during the Maskhaman and the 'old normal' that one has lived for years before the Maskhaman, along with the worldly pressure and expectation to get back to the 'old normal', there is an opportunity to create a 'new normal' for oneself. In the mind the memory of the recent experience of bliss, wisdom and energy generated during the Maskhaman battles with the instinct to resort to old habits and worldly expectations due to years of old conditioning.

The next few days after the Maskhaman are the defining moments. One can either succumb back to the 'old normal' or leverage the momentum to embark on the journey to chart a 'new normal' with devotion and determination to self-discover and explore on a new journey that would potentially last for the rest of current human life with the goal of sustainably experiencing the spiritual bliss that one experienced during the Maskhaman and perhaps discovering more.

JD: What are the benefits of taking on such Tapasya?

Seeker: Any type of Tapasya is beneficial; during which one:

- identifies one's identity with the soul separate from the body, mind, other living organisms, world ecosystem and materialistic possession
- experiences the pleasure of being in absolute meditative state observing the body, mind and the surrounding eco-system with a curious, equanimous and non-judgmental attitude
- experiences glimpses of the union and conversations with the Tirthankar
- appreciates, validates, and strengthens experience generated faith and love for the Tirthankar
- attains periods of un-paralleled peaks of peace and bliss that one wishes to remain perpetually in

- experiences the process of gradual absolute purification of mind and body, and the resultant bliss that comes with it
- undergoes a change in perspective on how one perceives other living beings including leaves, flowers, trees, birds, insects, animals, and nature - generating spontaneous and abundant self-joyous love, affection, and respect for them
- realizes the wisdom stated in the scriptures at an experiential level rather than mere intellectual level
- gains clarity of the purpose of life beyond worldly engagement and goals
- develops faith generated strong will power
- loses significant body fat, toxic elements within the body
- Overcomes toxic food habits and completely overhauls the digestive system
- generates a significant amount of internal energy that far exceeds the loss of body strength, enabling mindful emotional, mental, and spiritual exploration
- gains the desire and determination to embark on a journey to discover the path to sustainably realize the peace and bliss experienced during the Maskhaman while re-engaging in the materialistic world

JD: Wow! I never realized there are so many benefits of doing Tapasya. Thank you very much for sharing your experience. Do you have any final advise for our readers?

Seeker: Finally, Maskhaman may not be the only way to experience the above. There could be alternative ways of achieving the same experiences. Also, the number of days one fasts is irrelevant, it is the state of mind and attitude that is important. If one can achieve the same state of mind by giving up one meal on just one day and does not achieve that state of mind and the resultant experience during the entire period of Maskhaman, in my view that one meal day experience is significantly more valuable than the Maskhaman. Hence, rather than chasing a number and a worldly goal, it is important to focus on the divine intent and experience of the journey. Trust and surrender to the divine. Let it guide you. May you experience the ultimate peace, bliss, and union with the divine. God bless.

My Favorite Jain Temple

RANAKPUR JAIN TEMPLE, NEAR SADRI TOWN,
Pali district, Rajasthan, India.



Ranakpur Jain Temple with 1444 pillars and intricate carvings, Chaumukhi Pratima in the Gabhara, the temple built in the form of Nalini-Gulma Vimana and the Parshwanath Pratima in the nearby temple are very attractive.

NAVIN SHAMJI DEDHIA
San Jose, California

INDIANAPOLIS HINDU TEMPLE WITH JAIN IDOLS,
Indianapolis, Indiana USA



It has both Digambar & Shwetambar idols and it is close to me.

ANONYMOUS
Carmel, Indiana

BADA, PADAMPURA,
Rajasthan, India



We used to go there quite often with family and friends. We did Padyatra to Padampura a number of times with Jain Sangh. Feel the peace the moment you enter the grand, round shaped and architectural marvel temple built with marble with divine idol of 1008 Shri Padamprabhu bhagwan.

ANONYMOUS
Cupertino, California

SHRI NAKODA PARSHWANATH JAIN TEMPLE,
Mewa Nagar, Rajasthan, India



Since childhood I have been visiting this temple. I feel connected to this temple. My entire family worships Nakodaji. We truly believe in him.

JINESH KACHHARA
Morristown, New Jersey

SHRI 1008 VIGHNAHAR PARSHWANATH TEMPLE,
Mahua, Gujarat, India



It was known as Shri Chandraprabhu Digamber Jain mandir. The original name of the village was Madhupuri. Shri Vighnahar Parshvanath's Digamber idol was dug out in Sultanabad village of Khandesh, Maharashtra, India. It is black 47 inch tall idol.

GIRISH B. SHAH
Streamwood, Illinois

SHRI ADINATH DIGAMBER JAIN ATISHAY KSHETRA,
Chand kheri, Khanpur, Rajasthan, India



It is a very calm and peaceful place. The beautiful idol of Lord Adinath, located in the basement, is magnificent. The Teerth Kshetra has great facilities for lodging as well as a bhojanshala for great food.

ANONYMOUS
Irving, Texas

MAHUDI TIRTH,
Gujarat, India



Mahudi Jain Temple in Gujarat touched my heart in many ways in childhood as going with family, staying there overnight and ringing the bell at Ghantakarna Mahavir temple is exciting & remembering Sukhadi in childhood before even reaching there.

KAUSHAL GANDHI
Allentown, Pennsylvania

JSMC,
Bartlette, Illinois, USA



We have been attached to this Chicago Jain community for 45 years.

MAHENDRA SHAH
Bloomington, Illinois

JAIN CENTER OF AMERICA,
Elmhurst, Queens, New York USA



This temple is unique in many ways. It is perhaps the first temple in USA as well as world to have all major (5) traditions (Digambar, Deravasi, Sthanakvasi, Shrimad, Dadadwadi/Ashtapad) of Jain-ism under single roof.

ARVIND VORA
Kings Park, New York

SAMBHAVNATH JAIN SHWETAMBER TEMPLE,
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India



This is the temple where we four brothers used to go everyday for POOJA and pathashala. It is a 60 year old temple, recently jirnodhar in 2019

KAMALESH DUNGARMAL JAIN
San Ramon, California

SHATRUNJAYA TEMPLES,
Palitana, Gujrat, India



My last memory of the Shatrunjaya hill climb in 2019 & visiting the many temples has and always been a time of peaceful reflection for me. Have been lucky to average a biennial trip since childhood with parents/siblings & now with my spouse/children.

JEET SANGHVI
Northville, Michigan

SHRI ADINATH JAIN TIRTH,
Bidada, Kutch, Gujarat, India



48" tall amazing idol of Shree Adinath Bhagwan completed 100 years during 2016 and is considered as a Teerth. This vast and splendid temple with five beautiful Shikhars in the center of the village is part of small Panchteerth of Kutch.

NAVIN SHAMJI DEDHIA
San Jose, California

**JAIN SOCIETY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA,
ANILA VIJAY POONI TIRTH,
Altamonte Spring, Florida, USA**



Unity in diversity can be observed under one roof. The biggest achievement treasured by this temple is the unprecedented coming together of all sampradayas at a single sanctum-sanctorum for worshipping, as a single unified group of Jains! Also, this is the first temple in North America where we have 16 Vidya Devies, 10 Dikpals and 9 Grahas installed in the temple.

RAJENDRA A. MEHTA
Marietta, Georgia

**SHRI 1008 PARSHWANATH DIGAMBAR JAIN MANDIR,
Akkalkot, Maharashtra, India**



I used to go to this temple every day during my childhood until I was 15 yrs old. This was a place for worship, performing rituals, celebrations, pathshala, serving Sadhu Maharaj & Sadhvijis, and doing their seva. It has helped me grow spiritually.

SUSHAMA PAREKH
Los Angeles, California

**SHRI GODIJI PARSHWANATH JAIN TEMPLE,
Pune, Maharashtra, India**



Everyone in my family used to go to this temple regularly for darshan. On the right side of the main temple, there is an idol of Bhagwan Mahavir. Every time I did the darshan of this idol, I felt a deep connection; my heart filled with peace & happiness.

ANONYMOUS
Los Angeles, California

**NAKODA BHAIRAV TEERTH,
Mewa Nagar, Rajasthan, India**



Nakoda ji is one of the most famous and ancient Jain temples of India in Rajasthan of God Nakoda Bhairav and other Gods. The temple is sacred, beautiful, and blissful. Our family has a strong attachment to this temple. The carvings in the temple are beautiful. The temple has about 246 inscriptions which amply show that over the centuries, the temple was extended, renovated, rebuilt and additions were made to it.

MANISHA BHANDARI
Northville, Michigan

JAIN RELIGION CENTER OF WISCONSIN,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin USA



When I sit in front of the temple I feel very calm and peaceful and enjoy the time praying in a very peaceful environment. The temple has only Tirthankaras idols and pictures, along with the important pilgrimage pictures in India. The best part is that there never has been any GHEE Boli in this temple.

JYOTI JAIN
Chattanooga, Tennessee

SHREE MAHAVIRJI AT
ATISHAYA KSHETRA SHRI MAHAVIRJI
Karauli, Hindaun, Rajasthan, India



One of the Most Famous Iconic Temple of Bhagwan Shri Mahavirji at Atishaya Kshetra Shri Mahavirji, also called Chandanpur temple is at the heart of Jain Pilgrimages in Northern India. The Main Idol was discovered by a Gawala whose cow used to deposit her milk on this idol under a mound everyday. This 400 years old Temple is one of the most sacred Pilgrimages for Jains.

RAJENDRA KUMAR JAIN
Piscataway, New Jersey

JIRAWALA PARSHWANATH,
Sirohi, Rajasthan, India



Jirawala Parshwanath
I have only physically visited once there but peace I found there is unexplainable, even today I close my eyes and I feel like I am at the door of it

ANONYMOUS
Los Angeles, California

KESARIYAJI TIRTH
Udaipur, Rajasthan



Kesariyaji - A temple dedicated to first tirthankar Bhagwan Shri Rishabhdev. It evokes the memories of my early childhood when I used to go there every day. It's built like a fortress with big gates and stairs leading to garbhgrih. Different traditions of Jains, local tribals, Brahmins and Muslims worship in temple premises.

NARENDRA KUMAR JAIN
Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Are you interested in writing for the June 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 or send a Text or WhatsApp message to 310-721-5947 We would love to hear from you!