

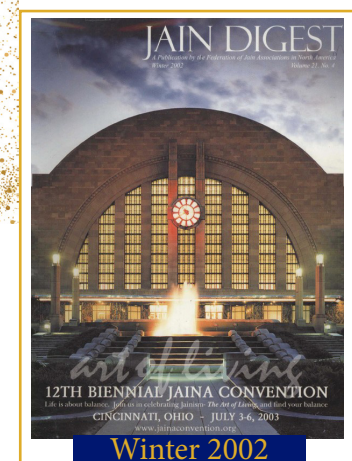
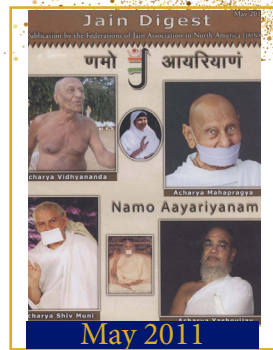
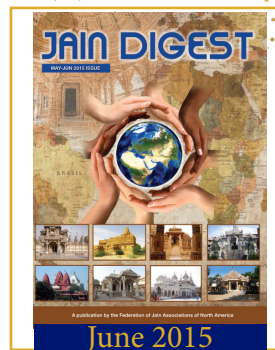
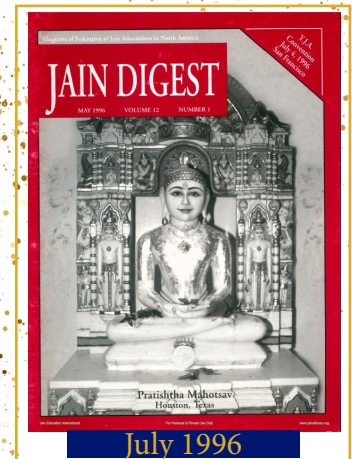
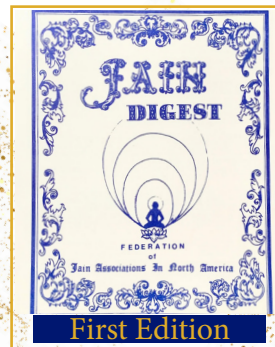
Jain Digest

June 2025

Volume 29



A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America



CELEBRATING JAIN DIGEST - A LEGACY OF CONNECTION, INSPIRATION & SEVA



JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the

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On the Cover

40th Anniversary of Jain Digest

From its humble beginning in 1985 as a newsletter to keep the Jain community of North America connected and informed, Jain Digest is now recognized globally as a valuable resource to get educated, inspired and motivated to live a Jain Way of Life. Thanks to JAINA, all the editorial staff members, advisors & authors for their selfless service over 40 years and the readers for their interest and support.

Disclosure

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



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EDITOR'S NOTE



JainDigest

With heart full of gratitude for the Grace and Blessings of Bhagwan, we bring you this 2025 edition of Jain Digest, commemorating its 40th anniversary! From its humble beginning in 1985 as a newsletter to keep the Jain community of North America connected and informed, Jain Digest is now recognized globally as a valuable resource to get educated, inspired and motivated to live a Jain Way of Life. Thanks to JAINA, all the editorial staff members, advisors & authors for their selfless service over 40 years and you, the readers for your interest and encouragement.

On this special occasion, we reached out to the past editors to tell us about their experiences and challenges. We also approached some of our advisors & guides to reflect upon their feelings and aspirations about Jain Digest. Their responses are compiled in the article “40 Years of Jain Digest”. Our heartfelt thanks for their contribution.

In this issue we are pleased to bring you 21 articles written by a total of 31 authors! We are humbled by everyone's willingness to take the time to write. Much appreciated!

We are thankful to the YJA team for providing us with two articles previously published in their publication - Young Minds. One article in Compassion section by Rihi Jain highlights the work of an organization “Village of Hope” that provides treatment and rehabilitation to the children affected by HIV. Rihi also reflects upon how this act relates to what she had learned in Pathshala about Karuna Bhavna. In the second article, included in the Young Generation section, Harshita Jain discusses ethics related to AI generated art.

Another article in the Compassion section is about Labhya.org, an organization in India started by three young people in 2017 that focuses on the overall wellbeing of children based on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) - a well-recognized global program.

In the Devotion section, Ramjan Hasaniya provides us with a commentary on a Gujarati version of Bhaktamar Stotra. In the Education section you can read about Panch Samanvays – 5 factors that shape our life; written by Rahul Kapoor Jain. Another article in the same section is by Payal Seth where she elaborates on Eckhart Tolle's different perspective on Forgiveness.

In the Information section, we have two articles by Dilip V. Shah. In one article he summarizes the speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of global recitation of Navkar Mantra. The second article contains reviews of two books by Pankajkumar Shah. Other articles in the Information section are: (a) Update on Shree Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya (SMJV) provided by their teams in Mumbai & Vadodara (b) A practical guide to living Jain values by Dr. Ramesh C. Shah (c) Narration by JAINA President Bindesh Shah about the historic meeting with Prime Minister Modiji (d) Information about Rishabhanatha and Mahavir Murtis at the British Museum by Dhruti Rathi.

In the Inspiration section we have two articles. In one article by Rajendra Kumar Jain & Murugan Nellayappan, we bring you a heart-warming life story of K.P. Ramasamy whose compassion and vision has uplifted more than 41,000 women from poverty to self-reliance. In the second article, we have an inspiring story of Steven Webb, a renowned meditation teacher. Even after a difficult childhood with physical & emotional challenges and a swimming accident that left him paralyzed chest down, he was able to find inner peace. We also share his five practices for inner peace.

In the Transformation section Ajay Sheth tells us a personal story of how he broke free from the wealth trap. An article by Ramesh Khandhar explores the real cause of our suffering and tells us how to create our own happiness. Another article in this section is by Hema Pokharna where she beautifully narrates her experiences at the retreat titled “Swayamni Prayogshala” - A Journey of Self-Discovery – held in Shree Pavapuri Tirth, Rajasthan.

In the Young Generation section, enjoy reading a script written by the Pathshala students at Jain Center of Southern California based on a story of Bharat and Bahubali that illustrates the power of self-control.

In the Conversation section, we are pleased to bring you an interview with Diksharthis Sunitaben and Rishi Zaveri, conducted by Sanjay Bhandari. Learn about their journey from motivation to embracing the life of Sanyam.

My sincere thanks to all the writers and the members of our editorial team for their dedication and hard work. If you would like to write an article for our next issue to be published in October 2025, please write to us at: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com Or call or send a message at 310-721-5947.

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh



JAINA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Members of the Jain Community,

Pranam & Jai Jinendra,

As the President of JAINA, I am honored to provide you updates through Jain digest magazine, reflecting on our organizational journey and the progress strides we are making towards a self-sustaining & adaptive organization.

Aptly, Our JAINA convention theme, **Unity in Diversity: Path to Peace**, continues to guide our efforts as we harness our collective wisdom & energy to strengthen our community.

We have undertaken a thorough review of our traditional aspects to identify areas for improvement. Our infrastructure has seen significant enhancements, particularly with standardizing news item collection, changes in memberships via online forms, the Finance Council's efforts to streamline all Treasury functions, timely tax filings, expense reimbursement tool and complete pending audits from 2017. These steps are crucial in ensuring transparency and accountability within our organization.

JAINA's services are delivered through close to 50 committees, each with its own success stories and challenges. While many committees have thrived, there are concerns about inactive or misaligned committees. In the coming years, we may need to make some drastic changes in committee leadership to ensure equitable service to our community. One of the key initiatives has been the introduction of liaisons who bring much-needed visibility to the work of various JAINA committees, thereby strengthening the connection between JAINA leadership and committee activities.

To earn the trust of our community, we are committed to being a nimble and reflexive organization. This involves providing timely and relevant updates to our

members and increasing our social media presence through a new marketing push. Our efforts to enhance the visibility of JAINA as an organization are ongoing. We have increased our global outreach by engaging with counterparts in India, UK, Europe, UAE, East Africa, and the Far East. We continue to sponsor the 'International Jain Conference' and have engaged in dialogue with Indian Prime Minister Hon. Narendra Modi. *(Please read separate article in this issue of Jain Digest about our visit with Modiji.)* Such initiatives are vital in positioning JAINA as a prominent global entity.

Interfaith initiatives have also been a priority. Our meeting with Lt. Pope Francis during the Jain delegation's state visit to the Vatican, Diwali function at the White House & the Capitol in conjunction with similar faith-based organizations, are significant steps towards fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding.

Special initiatives for the benefit of our community are underway; specifically the Senior Services Committee is embarking on **Jain Senior Housing** initiatives to provide comfortable living arrangements for our elderly members.

At the special request of the Indian Prime Minister, we have launched tree planting initiatives at Palitana, Gujarat, India. Additionally, we are raising the scale of the education loan initiative in North America to support the academic aspirations of our youth.

In conclusion, our journey is one of continuous improvement and dedication to our community's well-being. Let us continue to work together, embracing our shared values and striving towards a brighter future for our community.

With warm regards,

Bindesh Shah



40 YEARS OF JAIN DIGEST

With the blessings of Acharya Sushil Kumar ji and Gurudev Chitrabhanu ji, Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA), an umbrella organization of 72 Jain Centers in USA and Canada was formed in 1981. Its mission is to preserve, practice, and promote Jain Dharma and Jain Way of Life.

In May 1985 during the JAINA convention in Detroit, Dr. T.J. Salgia was elected JAINA President. In order to connect JAINA's fast-growing membership base, Dr. Salgia decided to start a quarterly newsletter. He named the publication as "JAIN DIGEST". Dr. S.A. B (Bhuvanendra) Kumar was chosen to be the editor.

The first issue of Jain Digest was published in September 1985. As of June 2025, more than 105 issues have been published. Throughout the past 40 years, JAINA leadership has provided unwavering support to the various editorial teams with funding as well as giving them freedom to choose the content of the magazine. Even though the content and format has changed over time, the teams have made sure that the content adheres to JAINA's mission to promote Jain Dharma and Jain Way of Life. The goal of magazine has always been to keep the Jain community of North America informed about news and events, promote unity, provide educational and inspirational resources, and motivate the readers to nurture human values that Jain Dharma teaches.

Since October 2019, the magazine is being published online on JAINA's website. This has enabled readers all around the world to read the magazine. It is heart-warming to see that the magazine is reaching to people in many countries all over the world – USA, Canada, Mexico, India, Australia, New Zealand, almost all countries in South America, Europe, South-East Asia & Far East, and a few countries in the Middle East & Africa.

The current editorial team of Jain Digest has been serving since October 2015. We are thankful to JAINA leadership as well as our advisors for their support and encouragement. Our special thanks to past JAINA President, Maheshbhai Wadher, for giving us the opportunity to serve on the editorial team. We thank all the prior editors (listed below) and their teams for setting high standard for the content.

Year	Editor-in-Chief
1985 to 1990	Dr. S.A.B (Bhuvanendra) Kumar
1990 to 1995	Surender Kumar Jain
1995 to 1997	Harshad Shah
1997 to 2008	Lata Champsee
Winter 2009	Dilip Punatar
2009 to 2012	Chetan V. Sanghvi
2012 to 2015	Lata Champsee

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Jain Digest, we wanted to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the past editors and their team members. Hence, we approached them and asked them to share their experience of working on the magazine. Unfortunately, since Dr. S.A.B (Bhuvanendra) Kumar passed away last year, we are not able to share his story. I am thankful to Surender ji Jain, Harshadbhai Shah, Lataben Champsee, Dilipbhai Punatar, and Chetanbhai Sanghvi for taking the time to tell us about their time as an editors. Additionally, our advisors and JAINA leaders Dilipbhai Shah, Maheshbhai Wadher, Anopbhai Vora, Dr. Sulekh ji Jain, and Prof. Atul K. Shah have contributed their insights and experiences in working with the editorial teams to this article. We are grateful for their unwavering support and encouragement. We hope you enjoy reading their narratives.

My sincere thanks to Dilipbhai Shah and Dr. Sulekh Jain in helping me contact the past editors. Due to space limitations, we were not able to get comments from members of the past several editorial teams. Michchhami Dukkadam. Our hearty congratulations to all those that have been instrumental in the success of the magazine.

Thanks to JAINA's Education Committee for making available the digital copies of past Jain Digest issues on eJain Library. This was helpful in getting the front cover images that we have used on the front cover of this issue. Thanks to you, our readers. for your interest and support. Please send your comments to jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

Wishing for Everlasting Growth of Jain Digest

Surender K Jain



Distinguished Professor S. K. Jain served the Ohio University, Department of Mathematics from 1970 to 2009. He also served as Director of Center of Ring Theory and its Applications from 2001 to 2009. Before joining the faculty at Ohio University, he was a Reader in Mathematics at the University of Delhi (1965-70).

Jain Digest, a quarterly magazine, published by JAINA, was established in 1985 and its first editor was Dr. S. A. B. Kumar. After he had served for five years, JAINA president Dr Sulekh Jain handed over the editorial-ship to me. I had the privilege for serving as an Editor of the Jain Digest from 1990 to 1995.

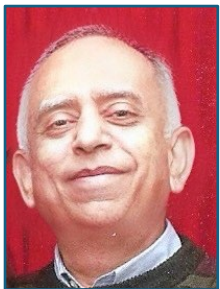
This short write-up requested by the present editor, Dilip Parekh, on the occasion of its 40th anniversary is to provide the readers with my experience. This was a challenging job that required time without having the present-day technology and tools. My job included, among others, inviting articles, collecting news from all over the centers, and getting advertisements. I was a full-time Distinguished Professor, and this was a challenge for me. Above all, I was busy with my wife Parvesh for our daughter's wedding arrangements. But I fully enjoyed the job, and got the support from several people, including Dr. Sulekh Jain. We published articles by well-known religious Acharyas, scholars like Dr P. Jaini (University of California, Berkeley), and scientists. We published an article on the work of a well-known physicist (graduated from Cambridge) and the UGC Chairman of the Govt. India, Dr D. S. Kothari. Dr Kothari was a true devotee and practitioner of Jain philosophy.

I had to redesign the Jain Digest from a book-size format to full-fledged usual magazine size format. This is the format which has been followed since then. The page was divided into two columns, as it is in most magazines. I had to hire a person who would prepare the format, do all the typing, with a very humble reward. Thankfully, some of it is now taken over by the present technology, although it still needs humans to set up and organize, which is not straightforward. This is a challenging job for anyone who has been doing it. I humbly bow to all those for giving their time and energy to the community.

On this celebration, I congratulate all those involved for its success and wish for its everlasting growth for infinitely many years! Jai Jinendra.

Working on Jain Digest – More than just an Editorial Endeavor

Harshad Shah



Harshad Shah served as the editor of Jain Digest from 1995 to 1997 while living in the Buffalo, NY, area. Prior to this, he was involved in the planning of a Hindu-Jain temple in the region. He currently resides in the Seattle, WA area and participates in activities at the Parshwadham Jain Center of Washington State (PJCOWS).

During JAINA's early years, I had the privilege of collaborating with Dr. Dhiraj Shah and Prof. Jagat Jain to promote the core principles and values of Jainism. Together, we not only shared news from Jain Centers and the broader North American Jain community but also shaped the focus of each edition of Jain Digest. Their guidance in selecting themes, reaching out to community members for articles, and securing advertisements played a vital role in the magazine's success.

I am grateful for the invaluable support of John D'Arcangelo, an art teacher whose expertise helped bring each issue to life. From helping draft the layout to coordinating with the printer and proofreading content, his dedication ensured a polished final product. We partnered with a mailing organization to ensure Jain Digest reached thousands of Jain families across North America. Since our home served as the return address, my wife, Bharati, played an essential role, assisting me in managing returned copies and responding to phone inquiries. One segment featuring announcements for those seeking Jain life partners gained significant traction, especially between 1995 and 1997, when matchmaking platforms like Shaadi.com were still emerging.



Reflecting on my time with Jain Digest, I realize it was more than just an editorial endeavor - it improved my understanding of Jainism, strengthened my connection to JAINA, and provided invaluable hands-on experience in magazine publishing and distribution. I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity to contribute to JAINA's mission and cherish the time spent working with our small yet dedicated team.

From Secretary's Desk to Editorial Legacy: My Journey as the Editor of Jain Digest

Lata Champsee



Lata Champsee is from Toronto, Canada. She was the editor of Jain Digest from 1997 to 2015. She has also served JAINA as a First Lady Jaina President, Vice President, and Secretary. She has been an active member of Jain Society of Toronto for 40-plus years.

I arrived in Toronto in 1969, joining my husband, Motilal, who had come earlier to study Chartered Accountancy. When I first came to Canada, it was a different world. Toronto in 1969 was quiet, cold, and unfamiliar, from groceries to language - felt like a challenge. I couldn't speak much English, and I certainly didn't have a career plan. But I had courage and hope.

As a new immigrant, I learned to adapt quickly. I supported my husband in his real estate venture. By 1972, he had completed his CA degree. But instead of following the traditional path, he surprised everyone, including me, by announcing, "I'm not going into accounting. I'm going into real estate."

People thought he was crazy, but he followed his heart. He opened his own firm, Rainbow Limited. In those early days, we couldn't afford to hire a secretary. So, I became the secretary, the office manager, the cleaner - everything. I did it all, quietly supporting our new life.

A Typewriter and a Turning Point

One day in 1976, a woman walked into our office looking for a real estate ad for a community magazine. She was part of a southeast Asian women's organization—the Association of Women of India in Canada - and she asked me if I could help her with a brochure.

At first, I resisted. "I don't know anything about this," I said. But she wouldn't take no for an answer. Back then, everything was manual. With only a typewriter and a photocopier, I helped her create the brochure for a Diwali function (in those days, that was the only Diwali function in the city). We cut out newspaper clippings, typed the text, pasted everything together, and sent it to a typesetter. In that pre-computer era, much of the setting was done by compositors. A tray with many dividers, containing cast iron alphabets, each with a single letter or symbol, but backwards (so they would print correctly). The compositor assembled these sorts into words, then lines, then pages of text. This form was placed in a press and inked, and then printed (an impression made) on paper. I sat there for hours watching this work. This taught me the use of different kinds of fonts, sizes and layouts of pages. I didn't realize it at the time, but that was my first taste of publishing.

A Magazine Sparked by My Daughter

In 1993, we helped organize the Kutchi Convention in Toronto. We needed a souvenir magazine for the event. My daughter, Sonal (15 years old) was a student at Havergal College and had experience editing her school magazine, which had even won international awards. She stepped up to lead the project, and I supported her every step of the way. I watched her for hours setting magazine on the software called Page Maker. Until then, I didn't even know how to turn on a computer. But I watched her work day and night, laying out pages and formatting content. It fascinated me. I sat beside her, observing, learning, and helping where I could. That convention magazine was a turning point. I had found something that truly intrigued me, something I wanted to learn.



Stepping into the Editor's Chair

By 1996, when the Jaina convention in Toronto came around, I decided to take full responsibility for the souvenir brochure of the 1997 Jaina Convention. It was 144 pages long, and I spent countless hours editing, formatting, and laying it out - often working late into the night.

I still remember the moment when Dhirajbhai Shah, the incoming JAINA president, saw the finished product. He came up to me and said, "You should become the editor of Jain Digest."

I was stunned. "Me? I don't think my English is good enough." But he didn't give up. He persisted. My husband encouraged me as well, reminding me of his own editorial work during his college days. "Don't worry," he said. "I will help you." With his support, I took on the role in 1997.

From Fax to Finish — One Page at a Time

In those days, emails were not common. Most material I received either by mail or by fax. I had to type all the pages, then formatting and editing, making sure it fit in the pages I had allocated. I was then a one-finger typist and still am one. This is how I started preparing pages of the Jain Digest in 1997.

I used to assign a week specifically for Jain Digest, "This is Jain Digest Week." I would sit down for a week at 10:30 pm with a big cup of iced coffee and work until 2:30 am in the morning.

I would edit and set each page, and my husband would go through them to correct the English. In the beginning, every page had at least 15 to 20 mistakes. Slowly, I improved. Until came one day, he told me, "You don't need my help anymore, You can do this on your own."

I decided to make Digest a quarterly publication. Before me, it came out irregularly - sometimes once a year, sometimes three times. I was determined to create consistency. In ten years, I have produced 42 issues. I might have missed one or two, but I stayed committed. I was the editor for 12 to 14 years. In the early years, news from various Jain centers came from regional editors. Later, Chetan Sanghavi and Deepika Dalal served as co-editors of Jain Digest. With their help and resources, we did publish a few remarkable issues. I can't forget their help.

Breaking Barriers and Inspiring Others

People would say, "How do you do it all?" I would smile. The truth is, I didn't think about it. I simply did what needed to be done. That's what women do - we make it work. And we do it with grace, even when no one is watching.

I may not have had perfect English or a journalism degree, but I had curiosity. I had determination. I had a story to tell, and I knew the stories of our community deserved to be shared.

I became the first woman editor of Jain Digest and the longest-serving one. My photo and message on the first page made me a familiar name in Jain households across North America. Over the years, women have come up to me and said, "You inspired us. We learned from your journey." That has touched me deeply. It made all the hard work worthwhile.

My Dedication

Producing the Digest wasn't easy. My routine was full. I'd wake up at 7:00 am, drive Sonal to school, making sure she had the best education possible, go to work, manage our modest business, and run the household. Jain Digest taught me more than English. It taught me discipline, precision, and the power of my own voice. I didn't have formal training or perfect language skills, but I had the passion to learn and the will to contribute.

I didn't just break barriers. I paved the way for others. And for that, I am deeply grateful. If there is one thing I've learned, it's this: *you don't need permission to become something great. You just need purpose, persistence, and a little bit of courage!*



Dilip Punatar is an experienced professional with over 30 years of progressive and well-recognized program management experience with the United States Air Force. He is a dedicated leader focused on continuously improving national and regional Jain communities for over 25 years. He led two JAINA conventions, held various levels of positions in JAINA, and successfully demonstrated the leadership roles.

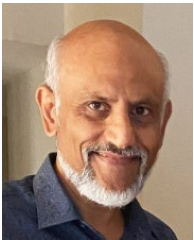
For the past 40 years, JAIN DIGEST has played the vital communication link for North American Jains as well as global Jain communities in many countries. News from other Jain centers gave us a feeling of togetherness and a sense of being part of one large family. I have edited and helped produce JAIN DIGEST in the past. I had the opportunity to serve as an Editor of the winter 2009 issue.

My role was also instrumental in addressing the abrupt suspension of the magazine due to the high cost of the printed version of JAIN DIGEST. I campaigned for several months and revived print and digital editions. Since this is one of the best products that the Jain community has liked for many years, support from everyone was overwhelming.

My congratulations to all the editorial teams – current and past - that have helped us reach our 40th anniversary.

Spiritual Learning – An Experience of the Past Jain Digest Editorial Team

Chetan Sanghvi



Chetan V. Sanghvi was the Editor-in-Chief of Jain Digest during the period between 2010-2012. His interests involve scientific validation and investigation of various topics related to Jainism and spiritualism in general. Born in the Jain tradition, he continues to struggle to reconcile his deep Jain beliefs, which still lack scientific scrutiny. He credits his guru Acharya Mahapragya for clarifying some of the subtle differences and relationship between truth as understood by tradition and finding truth by experience

Every time a new editor (or an editorial team) is appointed, the incoming team tries to come up with some new ideas to improve the quality, content, and readership of the Jain Digest. We were no different. Prior to being elected as the President of JAINA, Mrs. Lata Champsee had been the editor of Jain Digest for a fairly long duration. She approached me and asked if I would take up the assignment of being the editor of the Jain Digest. It was my honor to take up the commitment of publishing the Jain Digest. I truly appreciate Lataben for giving me a complete free hand with respect to the editorial aspects of the Jain Digest. Jain Digest was already established as a medium of communication among the Jain community in North America. I wanted the Jain Digest to not only remain a medium of communication but also a magazine with insightful information.

To bring about changes in the nature of production of the Jain Digest, I needed to recruit a competent and highly committed volunteer team. I was very lucky to be a part of an exceptionally good team. Our team worked cohesively and very diligently for the entire duration of our editorial tenure. We started our activities in February 2009 and passed on the baton to the next editor in late 2012. Our team included Heena Nandu, Reena Shah, Dr. Deepika Dalal, Shami Shah, Rupal Doshi, Dilip Parekh, Vimal Shah, Chandrakant Parekh, and Lata Champsee as an advisor. We soon segmented the team, where each of us had a specific role to play. I would like to take this opportunity to specifically mention a few individuals, whose unwavering efforts made our task possible. Firstly, I would like to appreciate the efforts of Mrs. Heena Nandu for her research, constructive comments on all topics of discussions, and assistance on all the editorial tasks. Second, I would like to credit Dr. Deepika Dala for some of the *out-of-the-ordinary* research on Jain history, and finally, Reena Shah (whom I have never met in person) for the many-many hours of content editing and improving the overall presentation.

We produced four main issues and multiple short eJain Digest issues to provide JAINA and other JAIN news. Each of our main issues covered a specific topic. I am providing a short synopsis of these issues and the motivation behind them.

a) Interfaith – Influence of Jainism on the society at large.

The issue was mostly on the impact of Jainism on society at large. Even though the Jain religion/philosophy has been embraced by a relatively few individuals in the world, its share of influence is significant. The purpose of the issue was to inspire every reader that one does not have to convert anybody to the Jain faith, but simply to influence others on the basic self-empowering aspects of Jainism.

b) Sadhutva: Namō-Aayariyanam

This issue was produced after over a year of research, internal discussion, and interviews with various Jain acharyas, Sadhus, and scholars. It was meant to be a tribute to the numerous Acharyas / Sadhus or Jain Teachers who have not only devoted their lives to lead the Jain Way of Life, but also to teach others about Jain philosophy, tradition, and above all, motivating individuals to empower themselves for a better life. Even today, we get appreciation for the presentation of this issue of the Jain Digest. I can univocally say that producing this issue was highly inspiring, and every member of the editorial team had something important to learn.

c) Titled: Live and Help Live:

The term “Live and Let Live” is deeply rooted in Indian civilization for ages. Its origins may be as old as the Rishi or the Shraman Indus tradition. So, how do we emphasize the value of this profound phrase from the Jain context? We felt the sub-term “let-live” was somewhat passive, implying more of non-interfering in someone else’s life. The sub-term “Help Live” implies the true form of compassion. Compassion is a very essential philosophical element of Jainism, and very much a part of an individual’s spiritual development.

d) Titled: Community Celebration

We ended our term by publishing an issue on the topic of celebrating the Jain Community in North America.

The opportunity of being a part of the editorial team of Jain Digest was not only an honor, but an inspirational experience, where we personally gained spiritually. We were all humbled by the experience, and we thank the Jain community for the same. Michchhāmi Dukkhaṃ.

Jain Digest – A Forum for bringing Jains of North America Together

Dilip V. Shah



Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently a member of the Academic Liaison Committee. He has been an advisor for the current editorial team of Jain Digest and is a frequent contributor as an author.

Jain Digest has been a forum for bringing Jains of North America together as a quarterly magazine since 1985. It was mailed free to Jain homes that registered for it. It is the only publication for the last 40 years reporting on activities of the JAINA federation, accomplishments of individual Jains, activities of member Jain Societies, and often Jain news from around the world. Traditionally, it gave publicity to JAINA initiatives like the conventions and pilgrimages. Occasionally, the magazine published articles by Jain scholars on Jain philosophy.

In 1998, I served as a JAINA Secretary, and the Job required writing reports of various JAINA activities for the Jain Digest. The last time I wrote anything longer than a paragraph was in 1965 when I was required to take English 101 at a University in Texas to demonstrate competency in the English language for Graduate school and I managed to somehow survive the ordeal. As I embarked on creating reports of JAINA EC meetings, Convention reports and Yatra reports for Jain Digest, I was thrilled to see my name appear in print for the very first time, and I have been contributing regularly since then. Editors of Jain Digest, first Lataben Champsee and later Dilip Parekh graciously encouraged me and awakened writing skills in me I did not know I possessed. I consider Jain Digest as my writing Guru.

Jain Digest, by default is the true record keeper of JAINA's activities. Since October 2019, it stopped publishing a print edition and gone digital, keeping up with the times. *(Only a small number of copies are printed for those who had requested for a hard copy.)* Many back issues of the Jain Digest are available on Jaina.org

I am looking forward to the time JAINA resumes the print edition of this beloved magazine.

Celebrating Jain Digest - A Legacy of Connection, Inspiration & Seva

Mahesh Wadher



Mahesh Wadher, the past president of JAINA, is an entrepreneur who has built several businesses in the hospitality distribution sector and commercial real estate development. His passion for spirituality and humanitarian services has led him to become a leader in the JAINA organization. In his philanthropic endeavors, he has helped foster support for health, education, and cultural activities

Since 1985, Jain Digest has served as a lifeline of connection and inspiration for the Jain community across North America. Under the visionary leadership of JAINA, the magazine was launched to bring our vibrant community closer by sharing news, promoting the timeless values of Jainism, and offering insightful articles on philosophy, spirituality, and seva.

In 2015, I was honored to be entrusted with the responsibility of chairing the Jain Digest and the JAINA Calendar committees. I appointed Shri Dilipbhai Parekh to take over as the Editor of Jain Digest. At the time, the magazine faced financial challenges that threatened its very continuity. With the encouragement of then-President Ashok Domadia, I accepted the challenge, secured sponsorships, and ensured the magazine continued to publish three issues each year, keeping the flame alive.

In 2019, as JAINA President, I handed over the responsibility of chairing the Jain Digest committee to Dilipbhai. With his remarkable leadership, the publication evolved with the times, launching a digital edition that reaches thousands, while still honoring the needs of those who prefer printed copies. He and his dedicated team have carried this sacred responsibility with excellence, creativity, and love.

To every JAINA President who supported this journey, and especially to the Jain Digest team past and present, dhanyavaad from the depths of my heart.

Let us continue to support and cherish this precious platform that connects us, uplifts us, and preserves our heritage.

Using Advancements in Technology to enrich the content of the Jain Digest

Anop Vora



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

I have been involved with *Jain Digest* in various capacities for many years, and I can sincerely say the publication has made remarkable progress, especially over the past decade. In the early days, we relied on a small group of writers to produce quality content. Today, thanks to the visionary leadership of Dilipbhai Parekh, we have uncovered a broad and talented pool of contributors who now write regularly.

The decision to go digital marked a pivotal moment, enabling us to include more content, integrate video links, enhance graphics, and reach a wider audience. Advancements in technology have truly been a blessing for *Jain Digest*.

My heartfelt congratulations to the entire team, and best wishes for continued success.



Heartfelt Congratulations on the 40th Anniversary of Jain Digest

Sulekh C. Jain, Ph. D.



Dr. Sulekh C. Jain is the Past Secretary and President of JAINA, founder and co-founder of several Jain institutions, Centers and programs, recipient of JAINA RATNA, promoter of programs in Jain Academic Education in Universities, Chairman of Governing Council of International School for Jain Studies in USA, and author of many Jain and technical books, papers and nine US technical patents.

It is with immense joy and pride that I extend my warmest congratulations on the 40th Anniversary of *Jain Digest* - a remarkable milestone in the journey of JAINA and the Jain community in North America.

Forty-four years ago, in 1981, a visionary step was taken with the founding of JAINA - a historic initiative that brought together Jains across North America, transcending sects, languages, and regions. JAINA was not just an organization; it was a movement, conceived as a federation of Jain Associations to unify and empower our community.

In 1985, another significant milestone was born out of this spirit of unity and communication - the *Jain Digest*. What began as a humble idea, almost scribbled on the back of an envelope, soon blossomed into a vital platform for sharing thoughts, events, values, and voices from across our diverse Jain community. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the late Dr. Bhuvanendra Kumar ji of Toronto, whose unwavering commitment and vision gave life to this publication, often against many odds.

The name *Jain Digest* itself is deeply symbolic - a true digest of ideas, cultures, beliefs, and traditions. Over the past four decades, it has grown not just in size and scope, but in significance. It has become a unifying thread that connects generations of Jains around the world, earning a place of great respect in the global Jain community. To the best of my knowledge, it has never missed a single issue - a testament to its dedication and the collective effort behind it.

I express my heartfelt thanks to all past and present editors, contributors, supporters, and readers. Your passion and service have been the lifeblood of this incredible journey. And most of all, I pay my highest respects to the late Dr. Bhuvanendra Kumar ji - a visionary whose legacy continues to inspire.

Congratulations once again on this proud 40-year journey of *Jain Digest*. May it continue to shine and grow, and I eagerly look forward to celebrating its Golden Jubilee in the years to come.

(See back cover of the magazine to read a poetic version of Dr. Jain's tribute.)

Jain Digest – Providing Excellent Service in Dissemination of Information

Professor Atul K. Shah, PhD (LSE) FCA



Professor Atul K. Shah PhD FCA is an accomplished thought leader, writer, lecturer and broadcaster, with a PhD from London School of Economics, and has published international books and research papers in renown journals. His work has been profiled/featured in Forbes, Guardian, Financial Times, Economia and on BBC Radio. He has provided valuable guidance to Jain Digest editorial team.

Hearty congratulations on the 40th anniversary of Jain Digest. Media is critical to informing and uniting any emerging community. It requires lots of sacrifice and patience, and cultivation of new writers and artists, which is never easy. Furthermore, the materialist and individualist 20th and 21st centuries have posed major challenges for the translation of Jain science and wisdom, in a language that is very different - English. Our own material success has also created new challenges for our community, accentuating egoism and selfishness. Jain Digest has given excellent service in this communication and dissemination.

Going forward, I hope this media embraces modern technology and becomes more active and interactive, allowing readers to comment, search, discuss, and share articles easily. Best wishes.



Starfish & Tanzania's Children

by: Rihi Jain



Rihi Jain is a dedicated public health student and aspiring healthcare professional, earning her Bachelor's in Cell Biology & Neuroscience from Rutgers University-New Brunswick, and is currently pursuing a Master's in Public Health (MPH) degree in Global Public Health at Rutgers. Along with currently working as an EMT, she remains actively involved in the Jain community locally and by serving on the YJA education and publications subcommittees for the past five years. (This article was previously published in Young Minds – a publication of Young Jains of America (YJA) on January 31, 2025)

One day, after a storm, a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking up things and gently throwing them into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "Young man, what are you doing?"

"Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up, and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die," the boy replied.



The man laughed to himself and said, "Do you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You doing this won't make a difference."

After listening politely, the boy bent down to pick up another starfish and throw it into the surf. He smiled at the man and said, "I made a difference to that one."

The next day, the old man gathered the local residents, and together, they threw all of the starfish back into the ocean.

This story was shared with me by an Italian reverend who runs the Village of Hope, an orphanage and school for HIV+ children that I had the privilege of visiting during a study abroad trip to Tanzania. During his narration, he drew parallels between it and his experiences in starting "The Village of Hope."

He explained that the Village of Hope was founded during a time when Tanzania had record-breaking rates of HIV infection. Due to the lack of access to adequate medical treatment, infected parents would often succumb to their illness, leaving behind orphaned HIV+ children that family members would abandon due to widespread fear and stigma. As a result, numerous children ended up on the streets, sick and malnourished.

From these conditions, the reverend began the Village of Hope, rehabilitating and treating these children, and providing them with a second chance — a new hope — for their lives. Today, the Village of Hope houses 160 children, and conducts schooling for 700 primary school and 500 secondary school students.



After the reverend finished telling his story, one of my classmates started crying, overwhelmed with emotion. Most of us were silent, in awe.

Throughout the rest of the trip, I reflected on the reverend's words, trying to connect his words and lessons to my own life. When I first learned about *Karuna*



Bhavana in Pathshala and at home many years prior, the concept felt both profound and familiar, as though it articulated something I had intuitively understood but never named. His journey made me question times in my own life when I hesitated to act, thinking my efforts might be too small to make a difference. I thought back to moments when I skipped opportunities to help or stayed silent, wondering now how those seemingly minor actions could have created a ripple effect if I had chosen differently.



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Throughout the rest of the trip, I reflected on the reverend's words, trying to connect his words and lessons to my own life. When I first learned about *Karuna Bhavana* in Pathshala and at home many years prior, the concept felt both profound and familiar, as though it articulated something I had intuitively understood but never named. His journey made me question times in my own life when I hesitated to act, thinking my efforts might be too small to make a difference. I thought back to moments when I skipped opportunities to help or stayed silent, wondering now how those seemingly minor actions could have created a ripple effect if I had chosen differently.

The boy and reverend reminded me of the universality of *Karuna Bhavana*, a core Jain principle that

emphasizes feeling and showing the utmost compassion towards all living beings. Hearing these stories and experiences made me realize that practicing this *Bhavana* calls us to act with empathy and kindness towards all beings, transcending the boundaries of culture, religion, and identity.

I realized that practicing *Karuna Bhavana* means not only feeling compassion, but also taking action to alleviate suffering, no matter how small the effort may seem. However, in order to alleviate the suffering, I realized that we must also attempt to understand it. Throughout the visit to the Village of Hope, my classmates and I were led through a part of the lives of these children- mass at church, schooling, play time, etc. while also learning about their HIV treatment regimens. It was both astounding and humbling to see the healthy and content lives so many of these HIV+ children lived, and the bright futures that lay ahead for them.

Every act of compassion, like the boy saving one starfish and the reverend healing one child, has the potential to inspire others and create meaningful change in the world. The boy inspired the local residents to create a larger movement to save the starfish. Similarly, the reverend was inspired and created the Village of Hope to heal hundreds of children throughout the years. Truly evoking *Karuna Bhavana* teaches us to open our hearts, listen with empathy, and take action, understanding that each small gesture contributes to a larger wave of compassion and healing. All it takes is one person to toss that first starfish back into the water to make ripples and waves that reach far and wide — whether it be taking an *Anuvrat* (“minor” vows taken by Jain laypeople), engaging in *Seva* (acts of service), or otherwise. When it comes to solving larger, and more overwhelming societal issues such as homelessness and poverty, the value of smaller acts tends to be overlooked when compared to the scale of these problems. Despite this, I realized that the “solution” will collectively be sown from the seeds of individuals. In other words, every little bit makes a difference.

Readers, with this in mind, I implore you to be bold and to take that first act of compassion in your personal and professional lives, towards a better tomorrow. Take that first step today, and for the days to come, because you never know what your seed will grow into.

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



Labhya.org - Investing in Children's Wellbeing

-Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Through Education

By: Richa Gupta, Co-founder and CEO of Labhya



Richa Gupta is the Co-founder and CEO of Labhya and a teacher-turned entrepreneur. She has a Master's in Education Policy from Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is a United Nations Young Leader for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and works closely with the UN Secretary-General and UN Youth Envoy office. Recently, she was honored with the prestigious Muhammad Ali Humanitarian Award 2024. She is a DRK Entrepreneur, a Mulago Rainer Fellow, and was featured in the Forbes Asia 30 Under 30 list.

Imagine Chandan, a 9-year-old boy living in the hills of northwest India. He wakes up before dawn, but not to get ready for school. He walks some distance away with his father to cut grass - a sickle in hand. The morning air is crisp, and his fingers feel numb as he gathers fodder for the cows. Winter is around the corner. Their family depends on cattle rearing. Without fodder, their cattle won't survive the harsh months ahead.

His teachers at school understand. They know that missing a day of school to gather fodder is sometimes necessary. They remind Chandan to come back the next day, to not fall too far behind. But they also know what's coming. Soon, the hills will be covered in snow, making it nearly impossible to collect grass. For families like his, feeding cattle in the peak of winter is a matter of survival. Therefore, no matter how much Chandan wants to be in school, life often pulls him away.

This is the lived reality of millions of children in India. Despite their best efforts, education often takes a backseat to survival.

The Hidden Crisis: How Learning Gaps Trap Children in Poverty

For children like Chandan, balancing survival and education is a daily struggle. After missing a day or two of school, returning to class can feel overwhelming. The words on the blackboard blur together, the math problems seem impossible, and he feels like he's always trying to catch up. At just nine years old, he is already falling behind.

Chandan is not alone. Research shows that more than 50% of children in India read below their grade level and struggle with basic math. Every missed lesson, every skipped day, adds up. By the time they reach middle

school, many are so far behind that they lose confidence in their ability to learn or even lose interest altogether and drop out.

This growing learning gap is not just an individual struggle - it is a systemic challenge that traps children in intergenerational cycles of poverty. Without foundational skills in reading, writing, and problem-solving, they grow up without the tools to access stable livelihoods. The weight of poverty does not lessen; it simply passes on to the next generation. Millions of children in India are facing this reality, not because they lack the ability or the desire to learn, but because the circumstances of their lives make learning an uphill battle.

The Missing Piece: Wellbeing in Education

For children facing such harsh realities, academic learning alone is not enough. Their ability to learn is deeply tied to their wellbeing. A child who spends mornings working in the fields or worrying about the next meal cannot be expected to sit in a classroom and focus on lessons as if those concerns do not exist.

This is why wellbeing in education is critical - it provides children with the skills to navigate stress, regulate emotions, and build resilience. When schools prioritize wellbeing, children are able to understand and manage emotions better, so they don't feel overwhelmed by their lived realities. They develop problem-solving skills and confidence, so they don't give up on learning even when it feels difficult.

Labhya: Bringing Wellbeing into Classrooms

Labhya was founded in 2017 by three young people, who were reflecting on the true purpose of education. Drawing from their own lived experiences of adversity and being in schools as educators, they wanted to create



change on a systemic level and redefine the educational landscape. Labhya has been supported by Harvard University, DRK Foundation, Mulago Foundation, and UNICEF among other organizations.

Labhya co-creates & integrates wellbeing programs into the education system, ensuring that children not only receive academic instruction but also develop the emotional resilience to stay engaged in learning. These programs are grounded in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), which is an internationally acknowledged best practice in education. It plays a critical role in enabling children to develop the emotional, cognitive, and social skills they need to succeed both in school and in life.



Through daily wellbeing classes, thoughtfully integrated to ensure holistic development and wellbeing, children take time each day to reflect on their emotions, build confidence, and develop skills to manage stress. These structured programs create a space where children feel seen and supported, where their struggles are acknowledged, and where they can develop the inner strength to keep going, even when learning feels difficult.

Some topics typically covered include: Understanding and expressing emotions, Building empathy and compassion, Managing stress and challenges, Practicing mindfulness and self-reflection, Setting personal goals and making responsible decisions.

Over the years, these wellbeing programs have impacted more than 2.4 million children across India, making it the largest in-school wellbeing program in the world. The impact of these daily wellbeing classes is visible in classrooms where children feel more connected to their teachers, where they are more likely to ask questions, participate in lessons, and persist through academic challenges. When children feel

emotionally supported, their ability to learn improves, and their chances of staying in school increase.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

While we have made significant progress, millions of children in India still lack access to such wellbeing support in their education. Without it, the learning gap will continue to widen, and the cycle of poverty will persist. Labhya's mission is to reach 30 million children by 2030, embedding wellbeing into the fabric of education so that no child has to choose between survival and learning. But achieving this vision requires collective effort - greater awareness, stronger partnerships, and sustained investment in children's futures.



Why This Matters Now

If we do not act now, the learning gap will continue to grow. Millions of children will remain trapped in poverty, unable to access opportunities that could change their futures. With early interventions focused on wellbeing, we can ensure that children's learning is holistic and sustainable. When children feel supported in their wellbeing, they can step into the classroom not as passive recipients of information, but as active learners, ready to build a future that looks different from their past.

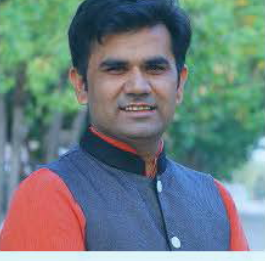
Invest in Children's Wellbeing Today!

Children's wellbeing is not an afterthought - it's a necessity. It's time we recognize that for children to learn, thrive, and build a better future, their wellbeing must come first. At Labhya, we are working tirelessly to make this a reality. We will keep building, keep growing, and keep pushing the boundaries of what's possible. Because we owe it to every child, to every dreamer. We invite you to join us in this global movement for children's wellbeing! (www.labhya.org)



Bhaktamar Stotra - Part 1

by: Dr. Ramjan Hasaniya



Dr. Ramjan Hasaniya is a Professor of Gujarati at the Government College of Arts and Commerce, Rapar, Kutch, India. He has done PhD from Kutch University on the depiction of spirituality in modern Gujarati poems. He was awarded the 'Acharya Yashwant Shukla Gold Medal' by Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam (Former President of India) for his master's degree in arts. He has delivered lectures on diverse topics including Jain sutras, stavans, Hindu scriptures, poems of Indian saint-poets, social reformers like Gandhi, Vinoba, etc. on various platforms including reputed ones like JAINA. His articles are regularly published in magazines like Prabudh Jivan, Shabdashruti, Parab, etc. His lectures are available on his YouTube channel. ramjanhasaniya@gmail.com

ભક્તામર સ્તોત્ર જૈન સાહિત્યમાં અત્યંત પ્રસિદ્ધ એવું સ્તોત્ર છે. ભક્તામર સ્તોત્ર ની રચના મૂળે આચાર્ય માનતુંગસૂરીજી કરી છે એ આપણે જાણીએ છીએ. લગભગ ૧૭૦૦ વર્ષ પૂર્વે આ કૃતિ રચાઈ છે. એના પરથી 'નેમિભક્તામર' અને 'સારસ્વત ભક્તામર' જેવી અન્ય કૃતિઓ પણ રચાઈ છે તો ગુજરાતી, હિન્દી આદિ ભારતીય ભાષાઓ ઉપરાંત તેનાં અંગ્રેજી સુધ્ધામાં ગદ્ય અને પદ્ય અનુવાદ થયાં છે એવા ઉલ્લેખો મળે છે. આ વાત તેની પ્રસિદ્ધિ કરતાં તેનાં કાવ્યતત્વની વધુ ચાડી ખાય છે. શ્વેતાંબર, દિગંબર, સ્થાનકવાસી, તેરાપંથી આદિ સૌને માન્ય એવું આ સ્તોત્ર છે. અલબત્ત દહેરાવાસી પરંપરામાં ચુમાળીસ ગાથા તો સ્થાનકવાસી પરંપરામાં અડતાળીસ ગાથાનું કાવ્ય મળે છે. મૂળ કાવ્ય વસંતતિલકા છંદમાં રચાયું છે.

ભક્તામર-પ્રણત-મૌલિ-મણિ-પ્રભાણા-
મુદ્ધોતકં દલિત-પાપ-તમો-વિતાનમ્
સમ્યક પ્રણમ્ય જિનપાદયુગં યુગાદા-
વાલમ્બનં ભવજલે પતતાં જનાનામ્

વસંતતિલકા બહુ જ મધુર છંદ છે. અક્ષરમેળ એવા આ છંદમાં એક પંક્તિમાં ચૌદ અક્ષરો આવે છે. ચૌદનો આંકડો જૈન પરંપરામાં બે રીતે જાણીતો છે - ચૌદ રાજલોક છે અને ચૌદ ગુણસ્થાનક પણ છે. આ સ્તોત્ર જાણે ચૌદ રાજલોકમાં ગવાય છે ને જે સમજીને એનું ગાન કરે, જાપ કરે એ જીવાત્મા ક્રમશઃ ચૌદ ગુણસ્થાનક ચડતો જઈ પૂર્ણત્વની દિશામાં અગ્રેસર થતો રહે છે.

સંસ્કૃત સામાસિક ભાષા છે. એક સાથે બીજો ને બીજા સાથે ત્રીજો શબ્દ જોડીને ઓછા શબ્દોમાં કવિતા કરવાની સંસ્કૃતમાં પ્રણાલી રહી છે. ઓછા અક્ષરોવાળા અક્ષરમેળ છંદમાં કવિને વધુમાં વધુ સામાસિક શબ્દો પ્રયોજવા પડે છે. ભક્તામર સ્તોત્ર પણ ચૌદ અક્ષરના છંદમાં આબદ્ધ હોઈ સામાસિક શબ્દો સહજ વધુ આવે છે. આ સ્તોત્રના ઘણાં ગુજરાતી અનુવાદ થયા છે, જેમાંના મોટાભાગના વસંતતિલકા છંદમાં જ થયા છે, એટલે તેમાં સામાસિક શબ્દો જ વાપરવા પડ્યાં છે, એટલે એ અનુવાદ વધુ સંસ્કૃતપ્રચૂર બન્યાં છે ને તેથી ઓછા ગુજરાતી લાગે છે. એટલે ઉપાધ્યાય શ્રી ભુવનચંદ્રજી મહારાજે એના ગુજરાતી પદ્યાનુવાદ માટે સત્તર અક્ષરવાળો મંદાકાંતા છંદ પસંદ કર્યો છે, જેથી અનુવાદ વધુ ગુજરાતી લાગે. અનુવાદકે સામાસિક પ્રયોગો સાવ ઓગાળી દીધાં છે. આ સ્તોત્ર ને સંસ્કૃત સમજનારા તો સમજીને ભાવપૂર્વક ગાય પણ સંસ્કૃત ન જાણનારા કેવળ પાઠ કરી જાય, એનો ખરો મર્મ હાથ ન આવે ત્યારે આવા એક ઉત્તમ અનુવાદના આધારે આવો આપણે એને આપણી ભાષામાં સમજવાનો યત્ન કરીએ...

કાવ્યરચના માટેના છ પ્રયોજનો આચાર્ય મમઝે ગણાવ્યા છે, એમાંથી એક છે 'શિવેતર રક્ષતયે' એટલે કે અકલ્યાણનું નિવારણ કરવું તે. કવિ મયુર સૂર્યદેવના સ્તોત્ર દ્વારા કોઢના રોગમાંથી મુક્ત થયા ને મહાકવિ બાણે ચંડીદેવીની ઉપાસના કરી પોતાના



કપાયેલા હાથ પાછા મેળવ્યા એવી લોકવાયકા મળે છે. રાજા ભોજે જૈનધર્મના આવા પ્રભાવક મંત્રની - કવિતાના ચમત્કારની માંગણી કરી ત્યારે આચાર્ય માનતુંગસૂરિએ વિતરાગના માર્ગમાં ચમત્કારની વાત ન આવવાની સમજ રાજાને આપી. તેમ છતાં તેમને બેડીયોથી બંદી કરાયા ત્યારે આપદધર્મને સ્વીકારીને શ્રી માનતુંગસૂરિએ પ્રભુભક્તિથી ભરપૂર એવા ભક્તામરસ્તોત્રની રચના કરી, જેની એક-એક ગાથાએ બેડીઓ છૂટતી ગઈ ને જેલના બંધન પણ છૂટ્યા. આ તો સ્થૂળ ચમત્કારની વાત થઈ. મૂળે તો કર્મોના બંધનને કાપનારું આ સ્તોત્ર છે. આની રચના પાછળ પણ સ્થૂળ સાંકળો જ નહિ કર્મોની સાંકળમાંથી મુક્ત થવાનો હેતુ ગર્ભિત છે. મુખ્યત્વે આમાં ભગવાનના ગુણો ગવાયા છે, એમાં ભગવાનના ચોત્રીસ અતિશયોનું વર્ણન પણ છે. ગુજરાતી પદ્યાનુવાદમાં આ સ્તોત્ર કેટલું મનોહરરૂપે ઉતરી આવ્યું છે તેનો આસ્વાદ પામવાનો પ્રયત્ન કરીએ. કેવો મધુર આરંભ છે, જુઓ:

ભક્તિભાવે પ્રભુ ! તુજ પદે દેવતાઓ નમંતા,
ત્યારે કેવાં તસ મુગટનાં રત્ન તેજે સ્ફુરંતા !
રૂબતાંને ભવજળ થકી ઉદ્યાર્યા આદિકાળે,
વંદું એવા ઋષભચરણે પાપને જેહ ટાળે

જુઓ સામાસિક પદોનો કેવો સરળ અનુવાદ થયો છે. મૂળ - ‘ભક્તામર-પ્રણત-મૌલિ-મણિ-પ્રભાણાં’ - અનુવાદ - ‘ભક્તિભાવે પ્રભુ ! તુજ પદે દેવતાઓ નમંતાં.’ આ ગાથામાં એવા તીર્થંકર દેવની વંદના છે કે જેઓ પોતે તર્યા છે ને બીજાને પણ જેમણે તાર્યા છે. નમોઽથ્યુણમ સૂત્રમાં કહેવાયું છે તેમ ‘તિન્નાણં - તારયાણમ્’ છે. આવા વિભુને વંદતા કવિ તેમને જ ઉદેશીને બીજી ગાથામાં કહે કે, ‘તારા ગુણો તો ઈન્દ્રો ઉત્તમોત્તમ રીતે ગાય છે. અન્ય સ્તોત્રો પણ ઘણાં છે ને છતાંયે મારે તારું સ્તવન રચવું છે.

સ્તોત્રો સારાં જનહૃદયને મોહનારાં ઘણાં છે,
મારે હૈયે સ્તવન રચવા તોય આ કામના છે.

કેમ એવું ? અન્ય હજારો રચનાઓ થઈ હોવા છતાં પોતિકોભાવ તો પોતિકા શબ્દોમાં જ આવે માટે કૃષ્ણની હજારો કવિતાઓ લખાઈ હોય તોય હજુ લખાય છે. મારે કંઈક જુદું કહેવું છે એટલું નહિ પણ મારે મારો ભાવ વ્યક્ત કરવો છે એ મોટું કારણ છે. ત્રીજી ગાથામાં કવિ ગાય છે કે,

દેવો ઊભા તુજ ચરણમાં ભક્તિથી હાથ જોડી,
હું ચે ગાઉં જડમતિ છતાં સ્તોત્ર આ લાજ છોડી;
ઈન્દુછાયા જળ મહીં પડી, જોઈને મુગ્ધ થાતું,
લેવા કાજે શિશુ વિણ કહો કોણ ત્યાં દોડી જાતું ?

હે વિભુ ! દેવો (જેને લોકો નમસ્કાર કરે છે) એ દેવતાઓ તારા ચરણમાં હાથ જોડી ઊભા છે. એક આડ વાત - માણસને કંઈક જોઈએ છે એટલે એ ઘણીવાર દેવને આરાધે છે ને એ દેવોને મુક્ત થવું છે એટલે તેઓ અરિહંતને આરાધે છે. તો આપણે સીધા દેવોનાદેવને જ શાને ન આરાધીએ ? જ્ઞાનની આટલી ઊંચી અવસ્થાએ હોવા છતાં કવિ અહીં પોતાની જાતને જડમતિ ગણાવે છે. આ એમની વિનમ્રતા છે. કહ્યું છે ને કે, “બડા બડાઈ ના કરે, બડા ના બોલે બોલ, હીરા મુખસે ના કહે, લાખ હમારા મોલ.”

કવિ પોતાની કવિતા રચવાની ચેષ્ટાને કોની સાથે સરખાવે છે ? તો કહે છે કે જેમ પાણીમાં પડતાં ચંદ્રના પડછાયાને બાળક પકડવા દોડી જાય છે, તેમ હું તારું સ્તોત્ર રચવા પ્રેરાયો છું. લોકો કદાચ હાંસી કરશે તો પણ મને ફિકર નથી. તત્કાલિન સ્થિતિને ધ્યાને લઈએ તો જો સાંકળ ન ખૂલે તો હાંસી થાય એવું બને, છતાં લોકોની જિનેશ્વર પરની શ્રદ્ધા ડગે નહિ એટલે આ સાધકે



પોતાની શ્રદ્ધાની જાતે જ કસોટી લીધી છે ને મજાની વાત એ છે કે આ શ્રદ્ધા જ કવિને જીતાડે છે. નરસિંહનું મામેરું આ જ શ્રદ્ધાથી પુરાયું છે.

ચોથી ગાથામાં કવિ આગળ કહે છે કે તારા ગુણ ગાવાની શક્તિ અહીં કોની પાસે છે ? વિદ્યા અને બુદ્ધિમાં પરિપૂર્ણ એવા દેવોના ગુરુ બ્રહ્મપતિ પણ તારી સ્તુતિ કરવા સમર્થ નથી. કવિતા છે એટલે અલંકારની મદદથી વાત મૂકાય છે. દ્રષ્ટાંત આપતા કવિ કહે છે કે, 'ઉછળતાં દરિયામાં જ્યાં મોટી માછલી પણ હારી જાય છે ત્યારે પોતાના બાવળાના જોરે કોણ એમાં તરી શકે ? તારી સ્તુતિ કરવી એ સરળ કામ નથી. તારા જેવા થવું તો દુષ્કર છે પણ તારી સ્તુતિ કરવી પણ દુષ્કર છે !

શક્તિહીણો કવન કરવા, બુદ્ધિયે અલ્પ ધારું,
તોયે ઊઠ્યો સ્તવન રચવા, દેવ યોગીન્દ્ર ! તારું,
રક્ષા કાજે નિજ શિશુ તણી શક્તિહીણું છતાં યે,
સ્નેહે પ્રેર્યું હરણ પણ શું સિંહ સામે ન થાય ?

હું શક્તિહીન અને અસમર્થ હોવા છતાં તારું સ્તવન રચવા ઊભો થયો છું. જે ઉદાહરણ આપ્યું છે એ મજાનું છે. હરણ પોતાના બચ્ચાંની સિંહથી રક્ષા કરવા કાજે અસમર્થ હોવા છતાં સિંહની સામે થાય છે. કવિની સ્થિતિ પણ આવી છે. કદાચ આપદ્ધ ધર્મરૂપે આ કાવ્ય રચાયું છે એનો પણ અહીં ઈશારો છે. જુઓ શાસન માટે કેવી કેવી પરીક્ષાઓ આપી છે સંતોએ ! કવિ છઠ્ઠી ગાથામાં કહે છે કે લોકો કદાચ હસશે તો પણ હું સ્તોત્ર રચીશ. પ્રશ્ન એ છે કે કોણે પ્રેરણા કરી ? જવાબ છે ભક્તિ છે પ્રેરનારી. ભગવાન પ્રત્યેનો અનન્ય ભક્તિભાવ કવિને આ સ્તોત્ર રચવા પ્રેરે છે. કવિ કોયલ- મંજરીનું ઉદાહરણ આપે છે. આ કવિતાની શૈલી છે. જૈન સાધક તીર્થંકરનું સ્તવન શા માટે કરે છે એનો જવાબ સાતમી અને આઠમી ગાથામાં કવિ આપે છે.

જીવે કીધાં બહુ ભવ મહીં પાતકો દુષ્ટ-હીન,
થાતાં સર્વે તવ સ્તવનથી એ ક્ષણાર્થે વિલીન

બુદ્ધિ થોડી તદપિ મનમાં હોંશ છે ખૂબ મારે,
આરંભ્યું છે સત્વન પ્રભુ ! મેં એક તારા સહારે;

આપણે ત્યાં એક ગીત બહુ પ્રસિદ્ધ છે - 'તું તારે કે ન તારે... તારો સાથ ન છોડું, જે જોડ્યા તુજને હાથ, બીજે હાથ ન જોડું.' અલખ ધણીના આશરે આ કાર્ય ઉપાડ્યું છે. કવિનું પ્રભુ પ્રત્યેનું સમર્પણ અહીં અનુભવાય છે. ભક્તિમાર્ગમાં આવી સમર્પિતતા હોવી આવશ્યક છે. આમ કરતાં કવિએ પોતાના કતૃત્વનો છેદ ઉડાવી દીધો છે. સાચી ભક્તિ આ કરે છે. ત્યાં હું કડું હું કડું રહેતું નથી. ભક્તિની આ પણ એક ફળશ્રુતિ છે. કવિ આગળ કહે છે,

આશા રાખું : ભવિક જનને સ્તોત્ર આ પ્રિય થાશે,
વારિબિંદુ કમળ દલમાં જેમ મોતી જ ભાસે

જુઓ કવિની આશા કેવી ફળી છે. ૧૭૦૦ વર્ષ પછી પણ સૌને આ સ્તોત્ર પ્રિય થઈ પડ્યું છે આ વાત સમજાવવા ઉદાહરણ કેવું સરસ આપ્યું છે તે જુઓ - આમ તો વારિબિંદુ એટલે કે પાણીનું ટીપું છે પણ કમળ પર પડતાં તે કેવું મોતી સરખું લાગે છે ! તેમ મારા સામાન્ય શબ્દો તારા નામ અને ગુણોના ગાનને લીધે સૌને પ્રિય થઈ પડશે. નવમી ગાથામાં કવિનું કાવ્યત્વ જુઓ કેવું ખીલ્યું છે:



તારાં સ્તોત્રે અઘ ક્ષય થતાં, તે તણી વાત ન્યારી,
તારી વાતો પણ પ્રભુ ! બધા દુઃખને ટાળનારી;
પ્રાતઃકાળે દિનકર હજી હોય ના આભ દ્વારે,
પેલી ઉષા કમળદલને શીઘ્રશું ના ઉઘાડે ?

અઘ એટલે પાપ. તારા સ્તોત્રથી પાપનો ક્ષય થાય છે. કેમ એવું ? - તો જવાબ છે સ્તોત્રમાં ગુણનું ગાન આવે. ગાન કરતાં ગુણ આપણી ભીતર આવે ને એમ પાપ દૂર નાસે. પણ અહીં તો કવિતાની વિશિષ્ટ રીતિમાં કવિ કહે છે કે, 'સવારે હજુ સૂર્ય ન ઉગ્યો હોય તે પહેલા ઉષાના અજવાળે પણ કમળ ખીલી ઉઠે છે તેમ તું નહિ કેવળ તારી વાતો પણ દુઃખને ટાળનારી બની રહે છે. લોકો તારા ગુણ ગાય છે, કારણ કે

તું છો સ્વામી ! ત્રિભુવન અલંકાર, તું મોક્ષદાતા,
લોકો તેથી તવ ગુણ તણા ભાવથી ગીત ગાતા;

એટલું જ નહિ ગુણ ગાતાં ગાતાં ચમત્કાર એ થાય છે કે એના જેવા થઈ જવાય છે. જેનું નિત્ય રટણ કરો તે મળે જ. આને ઈલિકા ભ્રમર ન્યાય કહેવાય. માટે કવિ કહે છે કે,

ગાતાં ગાતાં તુજ સમ થતા, ન્હોય એમાં નવાઈ,
સાચો સ્વામી સહજ કરતો આશ્રિતોની ભલાઈ.

આપણે ત્યાં એક ગીત બહુ પ્રસિદ્ધ છે - 'પ્રભુ તારા જેવું મારે થાવું છે, પ્રભુ તારું ગીત મારે ગાવું છે.' આ સ્વામીની એક મજા એ છે કે બાકીના સ્વામી તો પોતાના દાસને દાસ જ બનાવી રાખે. આ તો પોતાના જેવો જ માલિક બનાવી દે. આને કહેવાય સાચું સ્વામીપણું.

આવા સાચા સ્વામી તીર્થંકરોના બાહ્ય અને અભ્યંતર ગુણોનું વર્ણન અગિયારમીથી ચૌત્રીસમી ગાથા સુધી વિસ્તરે છે. અગિયારમી ગાથામાં ભગવાનના બાહ્ય અનુપમ રૂપની વાત છે. એ રૂપ જેને ગમી જાય પછી એને અન્ય કોઈ રૂપ ગમે જ કઈ રીતે ? જેને અમૃતપાન કરવા મળે એ પછી અન્ય ખારા પાણી પીવે ખરાં ? ઉપા. યશોવિજયજી 'ગિરૂઆ...રે...' સ્તવનમાં આ વાત બહુ સરસ રીતે કરે છે: 'જિલ્લા જે ગંગાજલે... તે છિલ્લર જલ નહિ પેસે રે, જે માલતી ફૂલે મોહિયા તે બાવળ જઈ નહિ બેસે રે.'

તો વળી ૧૨મી ગાથામાં વ્યતિરેક અલંકારમાં પ્રભુગુણ ગાતાં કવિ કહે છે,

દીસે સ્વામી ત્રણ જગતમાં સર્વથી તું સવાયો,
કેવાં દ્રવ્યે પ્રશમમય આ દેહ તારો ઘડાયો ?
નક્કી માનું વિમળ અણુઓ એ વધારે હશે ના,
તેથી વિશે તુજ સમ જુઓ અન્ય કોઈ જડે ના.

તું સૌથી સવાયો - ચડિયાતો લાગે છે ! કેવાં શાંત દ્રવ્યથી તારો દેહ ઘડાયો છે ? એવો પ્રશ્ન કરી પોતે જ જવાબ આપે છે. તું જે વિમળ - નિર્મળ અણુઓનો બનેલો છે એ બીજા વધારે હશે નહિ એટલે તારા જેવું બીજું કોઈ દેખાતું નથી. ભગવાનની અનન્યતાનું આ કારણ કવિ આપે છે.

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



Panch Samanvay - Causal Factors

By: Rahul Kapoor Jain



Rahul Kapoor Jain is an award winning motivational speaker. He likes to call himself a student of Jainism. He practiced the religion through rituals for the first 35 years in his life and then for a decade his search to understand the spiritual aspects of Jainism drew him inwards. Rahul has a vision to spread Jainism among Jains and others using this modern approach using the teachings of Arihants and Siddhas. He is a regular speaker on JAINA platform since 2015. His talks and videos on Jainism have impacted over 100,000 people across the world.

Have you ever looked at someone successful and thought: *Why do things seem to work out so easily for them while I struggle?*

Is it fate? Hard work? Just good luck?

I used to wonder the same until I discovered an ancient Jain philosophy that changed how I see life forever.

Jainism teaches us that nothing in life happens because of just one reason. There are always five powerful forces at play - some you can control, some you can't. But once you understand them, you stop feeling stuck and start taking charge of your life.

The 5 Forces That Shape Your Life

1. Kaal (Time) – The Unstoppable Clock

Time is the one constant force that never stops. Whether we like it or not, life keeps moving forward. Just like the seasons change, our circumstances evolve over time. A baby grows into an adult. A tree takes years to bear fruit. Everything unfolds at its own pace. You can't fast-forward success, but you can make the most of the time you have by using it wisely.

Example: Think about bamboo. For years, it barely grows above the ground, but underground, its roots are spreading. Then, almost suddenly, it shoots up rapidly. Similarly, many of our efforts take time to show results, but that doesn't mean they're wasted.

Practical Tip: Instead of rushing results, focus on planting the right seeds today. The key is to take action at the right time and trust the process.

What small action can you take right now that will yield long-term benefits?

2. Swabhav (Natural Tendency) – Things Are What They Are

Explanation: Every person, situation, and element in the universe has its own inherent nature. Fire burns. Water flows. Sugar is sweet. You can't change their basic nature. It's the same with people. Some are naturally calm, some are energetic. Some love numbers, others love art. Fighting against it only leads to frustration. *Expecting a fish to climb a tree will only lead to disappointment!* Understanding your strengths and weaknesses allows you to work *with* your nature, not against it.

Example: Imagine you're a night owl trying to force yourself into a 5 AM morning routine just because it works for someone else. Instead of copying others, recognize what works best for *you* and create a routine around your energy patterns.

Practical Tip: Identify one thing about yourself that you've been resisting and learn to embrace it. If you're naturally creative, don't force yourself into a rigid structure - work in a way that supports your flow.

3. Niyati (Destiny) – The Things You Can't Control

Explanation: Let's be real, some things are just beyond our control. You don't choose where you're born. You can't control the weather. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, unexpected situations may arise, and things won't go as planned. That's *Niyati* - destiny. But while you can't control everything, you *can* control how you respond.

Example: Consider the story of Nick Vujicic, born without arms and legs. He could have resigned himself to fate, but instead, he focused on what he *could* do—becoming a motivational speaker and inspiring millions.



Practical Tip: Practice letting go of what you can't control by focusing on what you *can* do instead. Next time something unexpected happens, ask: *What's within my power in this situation?*

4. Karma (Past Actions) – You Reap What You Sow

Explanation: Every action, big or small, leaves an imprint. Think of karma as a garden - if you plant good seeds (kindness, effort, honesty), you'll eventually enjoy the fruits. But if you plant weeds (negativity, laziness, dishonesty), they will take over your life. The best part? Your past karma influences your present, but the future is in your hands. You still have control over how you respond when the past karma comes to fruition. You can always start making better choices today.

Example: Imagine two employees - one consistently works hard and helps colleagues, while the other cuts corners. When a promotion opportunity comes up, the first one is naturally considered. Their past actions determined their future.

Practical Tip: Every day, ask yourself: *What kind of seeds am I planting today?* Whether it's through your work, relationships, or mindset, ensure your actions align with the results you want in the future.

5. Purusharth (Your Effort) – The Power You Hold

Explanation: This is the most empowering force. Even if destiny, time, or past karma set the stage, your effort determines how the story unfolds. The greatest achievers in history were not born with perfect conditions; they created their own success through persistence.

Example: Thomas Edison failed a thousand times before inventing the light bulb. If he had stopped at failure #500, we wouldn't have electric lights today. His effort changed the course of history.

Practical Tip: Every morning, ask yourself: *What is one thing I can do today to move closer to my goals?* Even small, consistent actions will compound into success.

How do these 5 Forces Work Together?

Let us take a simple daily life example – making tea for yourself and a friend.

- **Time** – To make good tea, you have to boil the water and milk with tea leaves for a certain amount of time; you can't rush that process.
- **Nature** – When you use tea leaves to make a drink, it will taste like tea. You can't make it taste like coffee!
- **Destiny** – If drinking the tea you just made is not in your destiny, you may drop the cup, and all tea will be spilled on the floor.
- **Karma** – You did your best in making the tea for your friend, but he/she did not like it. That is your karma coming to fruition (and your friend's as well!)
- **Effort** – Learning how to make good tea and not expecting that everyone will like it!

Conclusion: Jain philosophy teaches us that life is not shaped by one force alone - it is a combination of time, nature, destiny, past actions, and effort. While some things are beyond your control, your *purusharth* (effort) is always in your hands.

You are not powerless. You are the creator of your own path!

The Big Lesson – Take Responsibility! Too many people blame fate, time, or karma when things go wrong. But Jain philosophy teaches us to focus on what we CAN control - PURUSHARTH - Our Effort.

So, the next time you feel stuck, don't ask, "Why is this happening to me?" Instead, ask: "What can I do about it?" That's the question that leads to change.

Final Thought: Jainism reminds us not to see life through a one-dimensional lens. Everything is connected. Destiny and Karma may set the stage. But *purusharth*, your effort, decides the outcome.

Sources for Further Reading:

- Acharya Kundakunda's Pañcāstikāyasāra – Discusses the intrinsic nature of substances and their behaviors
- The Jain Doctrine of Anekantavād – Explores multiple viewpoints and the complexity of reality
- Jain Scriptures on Karma – Explain how past actions shape the soul's journey



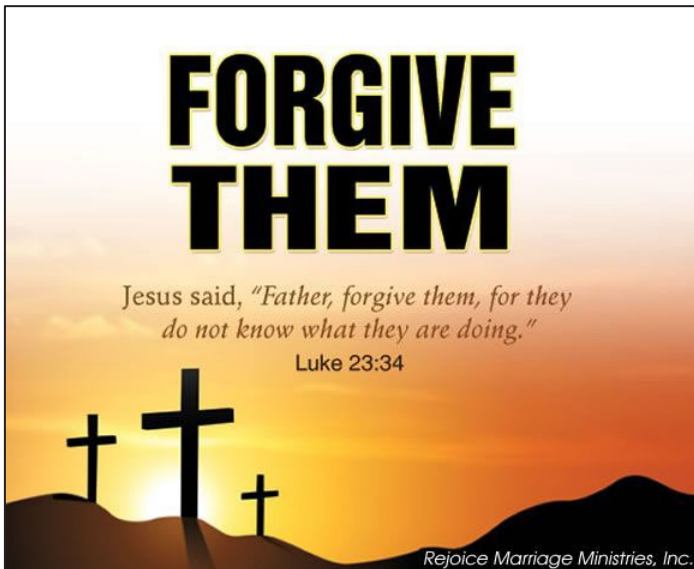
Forgiveness: An Eckhart Tolle Perspective

By: Payal Seth



Payal Seth, is working as an economist with Pahle India Foundation in New Delhi. She is also a passionate author who crafts illuminating articles, dedicated to exploring and celebrating the profound significance of spiritual values in our modern lives. Her articles have been published on several national and international platforms. payalseth1309@gmail.com.

I went to a convent school for 13 years (yes, my parents were keen to send me to a convent school; even for my upper kindergarten education!). In school, I heard the well-known story of Jesus Christ. I have heard it multiple times, and it still moves me into a deep contemplative mood.



Jesus, even when being crucified, prayed to the Lord to forgive his tormentors, "*Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing.*" This prayer led me to wonder: *of course, those men knew what they were doing! Why did Jesus wish forgiveness for them?* And not just that - he went beyond his own pain, feeling compassionate enough to pray for them. *How does one forgive in this way? What did Jesus see in his tormentors that we cannot see?*

As I grew up, I realized that forgiveness is a practice to be cultivated for our own well-being. Later, as I gained knowledge about other religious traditions, I saw that forgiveness is celebrated as a prime virtue. For instance, during the Das Lakshan Parva, Jains specifically focus on cultivating forgiveness (Kshama) on the first day. And on the last day of Paryushan

Parva, they ask for forgiveness from all living beings they may have hurt.

Various studies have found connections between forgiveness and physical, mental, and spiritual health, showing that it plays a key role in the well-being of families, communities, and even nations. So, personal experience, religion, spirituality, and science all promote the cultivation of this virtue. But I was still unable to fully grasp the depth of Jesus' prayer. It wasn't until I came across Eckhart Tolle's books "Power of Now" and "The New Earth" that this deep-rooted childhood inquiry was resolved.

In this article, I will explore Eckhart Tolle's understanding of human suffering, which generates the feeling of compassion and results in forgiveness. His contemplation comes from a deeper dimension—one that transcends the personal and touches the very essence of our being.



About Eckhart Tolle

Eckhart Tolle is a spiritual teacher who experienced intense anxiety and depression. One night, overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness, he had a



thought that changed everything: *"I cannot live with myself any longer."*

At that moment, he became aware of an odd contradiction in the thought itself:

"Am I one or two? If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me: the 'I' and the 'self' that I cannot live with." This realization triggered a sudden shift in his consciousness - he understood that perhaps only one of these identities was real. He was so stunned by this insight that his mind stopped. There were no more thoughts.

This experience changed his entire life. He spent next five months in the state of deep peace and bliss. Several years later he realized that the intense pressure of suffering that night had forced his consciousness to withdraw from his unhappy and fearful self. What remained was his true nature - the ever-present *I am* - consciousness in its pure state. Fortunately, he was able to share his insights with the world through his best-selling books.

The Illusion of Self and The Pain-Body

To understand Eckhart's view of human suffering, it is important to grasp two key concepts: the true self and the pain-body.

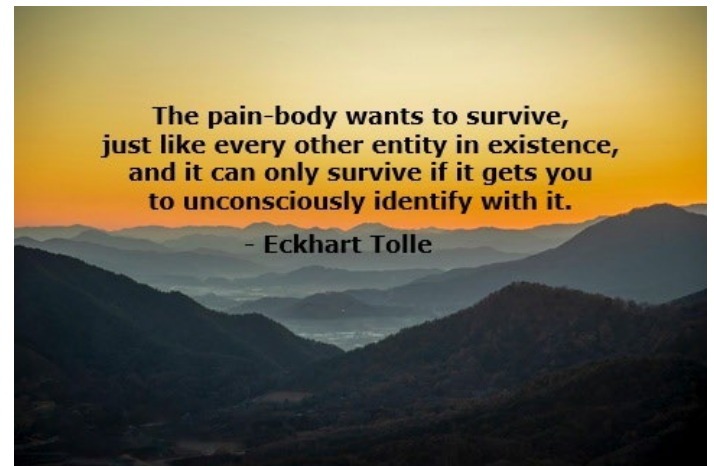
Eckhart Tolle teaches that what we commonly call the "self" is an illusion - a mental construct built from past experiences, conditioned beliefs, and a constant stream of thoughts. This false self, or ego, thrives on identification with roles, stories, and grievances, trapping us in a cycle of psychological suffering. We say, *"I was betrayed,"* or *"I am not good enough,"* believing these thoughts define who we are.

Tolle reminds us that beneath this mental noise lies our true nature - pure awareness, untouched by the past or future, which he calls Presence. When we step into Presence, we recognize that we are not our thoughts, emotions, or personal history. We are the formless, ever-present consciousness that simply *is*. This realization is the key to inner freedom - where suffering fades, and peace arises naturally. To cultivate this state, he encourages present-moment awareness or witness consciousness - a non-judgemental awareness of sensations, thoughts, and emotions in the mind and the body. Being in the present is the way to get in touch with the true self.

Another striking concept Eckhart describes is *pain-body*, which he defines as the emotional residue of past suffering—an energy field of accumulated hurt, fear, resentment, and grief that lives within us. How is this pain-body formed?

"Any negative emotion that is not fully faced and seen for what it is in the moment it arises does not completely dissolve. It leaves behind a remnant of pain". In Indian spiritual traditions, the equivalent of the pain-body is the *samskaras* - latent mental impressions lodged in the sub-conscious mind.

According to Tolle, the pain-body is not just a memory of past wounds but a living entity that seeks to feed on new pain. It gets triggered by external events, causing us to react in ways that seem disproportionate to the present situation. For example, a small criticism might ignite intense anger - not because of the words themselves, but because they activate old wounds of rejection or unworthiness.



Tolle explains that the pain-body thrives in unconsciousness - it wants us to identify with it, to replay past grievances, and to perpetuate suffering. However, the moment we bring awareness or witness consciousness to it, without resisting or fuelling it with thought, its power begins to dissolve. Presence or the practice of witness consciousness is the key to breaking free from the pain-body's grip, allowing us to step out of repetitive cycles of suffering and into a state of inner peace.

Tolle's insight into why we cling to the pain-body is striking: "We do so because it gives our ego a sense of identity. Even when painful, it provides something to hold onto—something to call 'I'. In the absence of



a deeper understanding of who we are, we unconsciously latch onto pain as a way of feeding our ego, no matter how destructive it may be.

Even enlightened beings have a *pain-body*. The key difference is that while most people identify with their pain-body, realized souls remain free from its grip. For the average person, the pain-body, though often dormant, can be triggered by external events. When this happens, unconscious identification with it takes over, hijacking the mind and emotions. This is where suffering begins.

The Root of Harmful Acts

Tolle reminds us that harmful acts arise from unconscious identification with the pain-body and subsequent suffering. People often hurt others - not out of true malice, but because they are trapped in their own suffering.

When someone lashes out in anger, manipulates, or acts selfishly, it is often because they are carrying unhealed wounds. They may be acting from fear, insecurity, or unconscious patterns they don't even realize they are repeating. This does not excuse their actions, but it helps us understand them.

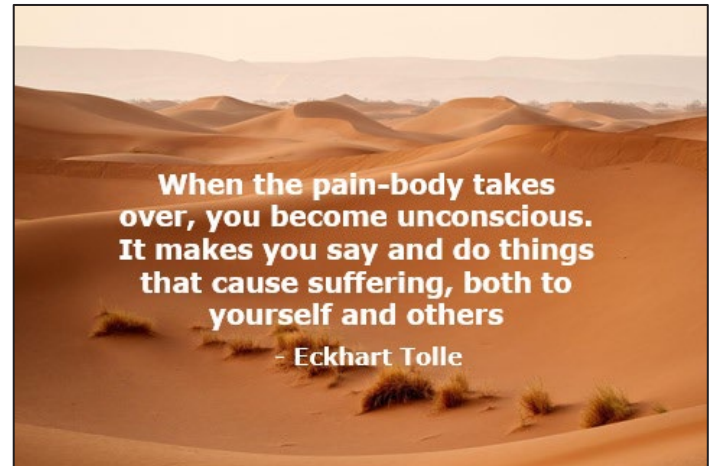
Blame may feel justified, but as long as we blame others, we keep feeding the pain-body and remain trapped in our ego. Tolle asserts that there is only one true perpetrator of evil on the planet: human unconsciousness. *This realization helps us to be non-judgemental and compassionate towards others who have caused us harm. This feeling of compassion then naturally results in true forgiveness.* With such forgiveness we benefit also as our own victim identity (our need to cling to the pain-body) dissolves, and our true power emerges.

Thus, we can finally grasp the depth of Jesus' words: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus saw beyond the immediate cruelty to the deeper truth: those who hurt others are often blind to their own actions.

Deeper Understanding of Human Suffering leads to Forgiveness

Tolle explains that when we realize that our loved one is sick, we do not blame them or scold them for being ill. We understand that their physical condition is a

manifestation of some underlying issue that needs to be healed. Hence, even if our loved one behaves irritably due to their illness, our love for them fosters a sense of compassion. We are then able to tolerate their behavior and forgive them. We recognize that this behavior is not their true self; rather, it is the illness that makes them bitter.



Tolle extends this logic describing unconscious identification with the mind and the pain body as a form of illness. He asserts that almost everyone suffers from this condition to varying degrees. The moment we realize this, resentment dissolves. After all, how can we resent someone's illness? How can we resent someone who is so consumed by the voice in their head that they are unable to recognize their true nature? At that time, we transcend resentment. Compassion takes over, and just as with physical illness, the only appropriate response in this case as well is forgiveness.

It is with this perspective that enlightened masters - Jesus, Buddha, Mahavira, and others - looked at the world. They must have felt an irresistible surge and compassion to help people - even those intent on harming them - break free from their identification with the mind and realize their pure, eternal nature.

Contemplating on our true self, getting a better understanding of the impact of the pain-body, and cultivating compassion & forgiveness are among the few steps we can take to come closer to the reality of enlightened masters - the same shared reality, which is the true "I."



Shri Narendra Modi at the Navkar Mahamantra Divas

By: Dilip V. Shah

Jain International Trade Organization (JITO) headquartered in Mumbai called upon the entire Jain community of the world to chant together Navkar Mahamantra on the morning of April 9, 2025, for world peace. At thousands of gatherings globally, dignified chanting of Navkar Mahamantra was undertaken to showcase our unity and express our commitment to world peace. The main event took place at the Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi, where the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi officiated in the presence of Jain community leaders from all over the country, and it was streamed live worldwide.

The presence of the Prime Minister was magical. Everything he did, said, and projected was reflective of the highest Jain ideals and a reminder of the somberness of the day. He alighted from his car barefoot, had a white shawl on his shoulder, no chit chat with those who greeted him, and upon entering the hall, took his seat in a humble manner. The chanting of Navkar Mahamantra lasted approximately twenty minutes during which he was fully immersed in it, he sat erect, motionless and eyes closed singing every single syllable with utmost sincerity. After the chanting, Prime Minister Modi addressed the gathering. He spoke for forty-eight minutes, as usual, without any notes, looking straight into the crowd, and giving everyone a feeling that he was talking directly to them.

<https://bit.ly/Modiji-Navkar-Mahamantra>

The message of his forty-eight-minute speech was fit for a Samayik. He began by saying how internally peaceful he was still feeling due to the chanting. He explained that recitation of Navkar Mantra is bowing down to Panch Parmeshthi and enumerated their 108 qualities that are worthy of worship. Not just every word but every letter, every syllable is akin to a Mantra and a path for self-purification. The veneration of Panch Parmeshthi is Samyag Gyan, Samyag Darshan, and Samyag Charitra a path to Moksh. He mentioned the return of twenty Tirthankar murtis from foreign lands in the last few years. He irrefutably stated that throughout history, the contribution of Jain Dharma to Bharat's prestige worldwide has been invaluable. He pointed to the new Parliament building adorned by so many Jain motifs like Samed Shikhar, Tirthankara murti at the entrance of the building, recently returned from Australia, a beautiful Mahavir swami painting on the ceiling of the Parliament, and all twenty-four Tirthankaras are painted on the South building wall.

Modiji described Jain Darshan as a guiding light to our democracy. He quoted multiple sutras from Agams in Prakrit language and stated that these teachings have inspired his government's philosophy "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas". He said that Jain literature is the backbone of Bharat's intellectual wealth. It is our duty to adopt the

wisdom of this literature. For this reason, we have bestowed the honor of "The Classical languages of India" status to Prakrit and Pali that will enable more research on Jain Literature as we have hundreds of year-old manuscripts in *Pandu lipi* - each page an ocean of knowledge and depository of history. Sadly, with the passing of time, we are losing these manuscripts and for this reason, we have budgeted in the current year, the creation of the Gyan Bharat Mission that will catalog and digitize millions of *Pandu lipi* manuscripts and give them new life.

The Prime Minister said that the new Bharat will explore possibilities offered by AI and connect them to the spiritual world. He noted that from what he has learned of Jain Dharma, it is a scientific religion. Solutions to all the modern burning issues of the world like wars, terrorism, or environmental challenges are covered in the Jain tenets. He marveled at the Jain slogan *Parsparagraha Jivanam* prohibiting killing of the tiniest of life.

The Prime Minister said that the concept of Anekantvad in Jain Dharma is an important one. When we internalize Anekantvad, the issues of wars and disputes simply do not arise. Understanding other person's view is the key to peace. Today the world needs Anekantvad the most urgently. He also praised Jain concept of Aparigraha as essential to sustainable lifestyle. The time has come to spread message to every person. Once again Modiji repeated the wisdom of *Parsparagraha Jivanam*.

In parting remarks, the Prime Minister shared "9 Sankalp" - nine personal and collective commitments that beautifully echoed the Jain philosophy of responsible living and community upliftment. He urged everyone to embrace these 9 Sankalps as one's contribution to nation building.

1. Conserve Water
2. Plant a tree in the name of your mother
3. Embrace cleanliness as a personal mission
4. Support local products and entrepreneurs
5. Discover and appreciate your homeland
6. Practice and promote natural farming
7. Live a healthy lifestyle
8. Incorporate yoga and sports into daily life
9. Extend support to the underprivileged

The monumental event where the Prime minister demonstrated his knowledge and respect of Jain Dharma was hugely appreciated by the crowd present at the Vigyan Bhavan. He pointed at the demonstration of Jain Unity in holding this event by all major Jain sects. The prime minister ended with the slogan Jai Jinendra three times, and he was loudly applauded for a prolonged period.



Book Reviews: Nirvan Dating of Mahavir Swami and Bridging the Cosmos

By: Dilip V. Shah



Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently a member of the Academic Liaison Committee. He has been an advisor for the current editorial team of Jain Digest and is a frequent contributor as an author.

*This article consists a review of two books written by **Pankajkumar K. Shah**. He arrived in America as a student, received Master of Science degrees in mechanical and nuclear engineering and obtained an MBA degree too. He settled in Boston and began his professional career. He established himself as a leading international consultant in designing the nuclear reactor vessels and nuclear power plant components. He served as the Chairman of the Jain Center of Boston, a Pathshala Director, and continued to pursue his passion – passing the rich heritage to the next generation of youth born in the USA.*

Pankajkumar grew up in Godhara, Gujarat, in a devout Jain family. He firmly believed what his parents had told him during his childhood, that Agams contained knowledge of every imaginable subject. He was fascinated by assertions that Agams contained an extensive amount of mathematics and astronomy intricately woven with Jain cosmology. The two subjects became his lifelong passion and embarked on two extremely ambitious projects. He organized a symposium on the Nirvan Dating of Tirthankar Mahavir Swami in Pune, India, in 2022, with the support of the JAINA Academic Liaison Committee and the Jain Center of Greater Boston. He also organized the first international symposium on Jainism and mathematics at MIT, Boston. (Due to the coronavirus-related issues, it was held as an online symposium in December of 2020).

Nirvan Dating of Tirthankar Mahavira Swami

The Anchor Point of History of India

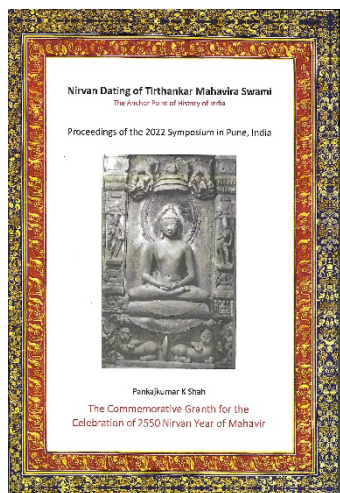
Proceedings of the 2022 Symposium in Pune, India

By Pankajkumar K. Shah

333 Pages, Hardcover

2024 Published by Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi

The Commemorative Granth for the Celebration of the 2550th Nirvan year of Bhagwan Mahavira



Bhagwan Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankara is widely regarded by scholars as a historical figure. While nearly all the Jain communities accept 527 BCE as the year of Mahavir's Nirvana, this remains a point of contention among non-Jain Indian and Western scholars. Similarly, there are multiple dates for Buddha's Nirvan too, with the date varying from country to country and from one sect to another within Buddhism.

Two significant figures emerged in India in the sixth and seventh century BCE: Mahavira and Buddha. Their teachings reverberated not just in India, but globally. Ironically, the finalizing of the Nirvan years of Mahavira and Buddha remains a topic of ongoing academic research. It is widely believed in India and globally that Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries, but there is no record of them meeting at any place despite traveling in the same region. This belief may have originated from identifying Nigantha Natputta, a figure mentioned in Buddhist scriptures as Mahavira. Notably, the Jain *Agams*, do not mention Buddha in any context.

Pankajkumar Shah noticed many Buddhists and Western scholars have opined with Nirvan dating from 470 BCE to 1300 BCE. Prof. Heinz Bechert organized Buddha Nirvan Dating conference in 1988 in Germany. About 150 years before that, many Westerners portrayed Jainism as a branch of Buddhism. Pankajkumar thought there was a need for a studied search and analysis of the various viewpoints and to present a unified Jain position on the Nirvan Date of Mahavir and remove the uncertainty posed by Western scholars. The dating is important because Jains use Veer Samvat as an anchor point of history.



Pankajkumar organized a symposium on the Nirvan Dating of Tirthankar Mahavir Swami in Pune, India, in 2022. The two-day symposium featured 20 papers presented on the subject by the international community of Jain scholars. As the editor of the papers, he realized that several key topics and recent developments had not been adequately addressed in the collected works. As a result, he invited guest scholars from Acharya Shri Kailash Sagar Gyan Mandir (Koba) to prepare additional papers under the guidance of Acharya Shri Ajay Sagar Maharaj. In the spirit of Anekantvad, all the papers with differing viewpoints are presented in the book, and here are the author's conclusions:

1. Mahavir and Buddha were not contemporaries.
2. Buddha's Nirvan occurred between 420 and 350 BCE, more than 100 years after Mahavir's Nirvan.
3. Nigantha Natputta of the Buddhist scriptures and Bhagwan Mahavir were not the same person, and they were not contemporaries.
4. Nigantha Natputta was likely a leader of some obscure Ajivika cult/sect that no longer exists, as mentioned by Prof. Padmanabh Jaini and other scholars.

The extensive research presented in the proceedings puts an end to the long-held belief in the contemporaneity of Bhagwan Mahavir and Bhagwan Buddha, a notion that has persisted for centuries among Jain, Indian, and Western scholars. It resolves a major mystery in history. The author fully endorses the viewpoint expressed by one of the scholars at the conference: "The date of Mahavira's Nirvan is thus definitively fixed as 527 BCE, based on its own merits, confirmed by both internal and external evidence, and is consistent with all known historical facts. It is based on an unbroken tradition of 2500 years. There is no need to adjust it even by a few years."

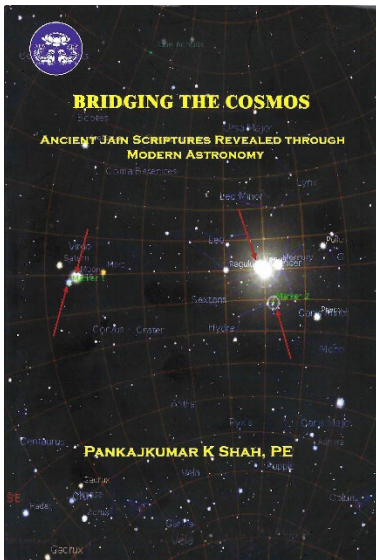
Bridging the Cosmos

Ancient Jain Scriptures Revealed Through Modern Astronomy

By Pankajkumar K Shah

133 Pages, Softcover

2022 Published by Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi



This book is a ground-breaking contribution to astronomical literature that connects ancient Jain tradition to modern astronomical literature.

During his preparation for the symposium, on Jainism and Mathematics, he came across a book called "Zero Point of Jain Astronomy". This was the first book he discovered that had a technical discussion on astronomy. He began thinking about using astronomy as a tool to date the life span of the 23rd Tirthankara Shree Parsvanatha and the 24th Tirthankara Mahavira. He used several planetarium software products, including the Stellarium and Sky Map Pro, supplemented by the "Panchang" of Kyoto University of Japan in his work.

He extracted data related to Nakshatras (asterisms) from major Jain Canonical scriptures dating back to 500 BC and examined the validity of these data using state-of-the-art astronomy software mentioned above. He was astonished to discover that astronomical data such as solstices (the time or date at which the sun reaches its maximum or minimum declination, marked by the longest and shortest days) and equinoxes (the time or date at which the sun crosses the celestial equator, when day and night are of equal length) presented in Jain scriptures were highly accurate and indeed met the scrutiny of

modern software. He was pleasantly surprised to find that there are no disagreements with regard to astronomy among different Jain sects – a fact that further strengthens the validity of the ancient Jain data dating back to 500 BC.

The most remarkable chapter in this book focuses on the solstices and equinoxes. It highlights how Indian/Jain astronomers were aware of the phenomenon of the 'Precession of the Earth' and had already conducted quantitative analyses and observations of it as early as 500 BC—well before the rest of the world. The importance and significance of Pankajkumar's work for the ancient Indian traditions and Jain traditions cannot be overstated. This work will be a guiding light for future investigators for a long time to come.



SMJV – Cultivating Values and Ethos

By: SMJV Teams – Mumbai & Vadodara

When our younger generation, unknowingly getting influenced by wrong practices all around them, are fast losing the values and ethos of life and religion; there is one institute, Shree Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya (SMJV), that is strongly contributing to counter this nuisance influencing our community and the society as a whole. In the October 2021 issue of Jain Digest we had provided detailed information about SMJV's vision, mission, history and projects. In this article we bring you recap of some of the information and updates on their current & future projects.

Shree Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya (www.smjv.org)

Founded in 1915, in Mumbai, India, the institute has continuously grown over the 110 years of its existence. Today it is changing the lives of over 1500 Boys and 800 Girls through its 7 Vidyalaya – Boys' Hostel and 5 Kanya Chhatralaya – Girls' Hostel across different Western India locations.

Cultivating Values and Ethos

It is important to imbibe the right culture and values in children at young age. While as a student they attain formal education, it is important to also cultivate them with the seeds of ethics, morals, ideals, principles, religious patriotism and leadership. SMJV does not just offer lodging and boarding facilities to the students; it also aims at their all round development and nurtures them. Towards this goal, there are numerous initiatives taken by the Trust and Local Management Committees of individual locations, from time to time.

Alumnae of SMJV

Today over 30,000 alumnae of SMJV are spread across the globe, including many in USA, and are very well placed to lead the community and the society towards a better tomorrow. Many of them are in the lead positions in various Sangh. Many have excelled in their business or career and are giving back to the community. Some even have renounced the world and have attained position of up to Aacharya pad.

Institute Leadership

SMJV has grown over the years under the able leadership of renowned and eminent Jain personalities. Few years ago, the Trust was presided by the well-known philanthropist Shri Deepchandbhai Gardi and today the Trust is presided by Shri Sudhirbhai Mehta, the Chairman and MD of Torrent Group of Companies, and also a broad hearted donor.

Further, since last few years, the management and administration of the Trust is in the able hands of its alumni whose selfless devotion towards the alma mater has resulted in magically transformation of SMJV. With the new vision, all facilities of SMJV have been upgraded for comfortable stay of the students and is also equipped with means for their all round development and well being.

Recent Projects

Appreciating the effective and transparent administration of the donations received by the Trust, many donors from the society and particularly the well-off alumnae of SMJV have come forward to support every new initiative put up to them for consideration.



SMJV Pune

In addition to lot of other initiatives, some of the major recent projects executed by SMJV include :

- During last five years, over Rs. 12 Cr have been disbursed as Higher Education Assistance, for domestic and international studies, during last five years to Jain students of all firkas.
- A new excellent facility for over 390 students has been put-up in the Pune campus of SMJV at a cost of over Rs. 50 Cr. Mr. Nimesh Kampani of J M Finance Trust has donated Rs. 20 Cr to the noble



cause. Other donations to the tune of Rs. 15 Cr has been received from other donors. Opportunities exist for others to join the noble cause.

- The Ahmedabad Vidyalaya building has been reconstructed with similar excellent facility for over 300 students at a cost of over Rs. 30 Cr out of which Rs. 25 Cr was generously donated by the U M Mehta Charitable Trust administered by SMJV's president Shri Sudhirbhai Mehta. A beautiful new Jinalay has also been put-up in the campus.



Kanya Chhatralay

- A Kanya Chhatralay – Girls' hostel along with a new Jinalay has been put-up at a prime location in Surat to accommodate 162 girls. Dr. Jasvantbhai Modi from USA, an alumni of SMJV, donated over Rs. 13 Cr as main donor for the facility. Many other donors from the society and alumni members participated in funding the project.
- The Vadodara Vidyalay building has also been reconstructed with ultra-modern facilities for over 192 students. Dr. Shri Jasvantbhai Modi generously donation Rs. 9 Cr for the project too. A beautiful new Jinalay "Manilaxmi Prasad" has also been constructed in the campus.
- Keeping in view the increasing demand for Girls' accommodation at Vadodara, in a short span of its existence, an additional floor has been added to the Kanya Chhatralay at Vadodara increasing the capacity from 108 to 132.
- A new Vidyalay – Boy's hostel has also been put-up at Bhavnagar to offer a comfortable stay to over 75 students.
- As a maiden direct education initiative of SMJV, a Management Institute was put-up in Vadodara

Campus in 2009 for MBA course at a cost of Rs. 4.5 Cr out of which an alumni Shri K M Shah had donated 1.25 Cr. An additional floor has been added to now accommodated students of newly added BBA and B.Voc courses. Opportunities exist for participating in this noble cause of education.

- Trust already has Vidyalay at Andheri, Mumbai for 233 students, Sanhurst Road, Mumbai for 161 students, Vidyalay and Kanya Chhatralay at Vallabh Vidyanagar to cater to 139 students and 95 girls, respectively.

Forthcoming Projects

There are many opportunities for the donors to participate in the forthcoming initiatives of SMJV:

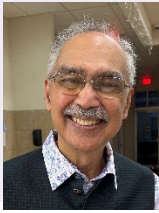
- To cater to the very high demand for Girls' accommodation in Pune, a new Kanya Chhatralay for over 300 Girls is proposed in the Pune Campus of SMJV at an estimated cost of Rs. 45 Cr.
- Due to ageing of the building and to increase the capacity to accommodate a greater number of students, the Vidyalay at Andheri Mumbai is proposed to be reconstructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 150 Cr.
- Acute demand for a Kanya Chhatralay at Mumbai has lead SMJV to explore options for a Girls' hostel in Mumbai at the earliest. The Trust is actively looking at options for the same.
- To increase capacity and to cater to geographical needs, a second Vidyalay – Boy's hostel is proposed to be put-up in Ahmedabad at a distance from the existing once.
- Similarly an additional Kanya Chhatralay – Girls' hostel is also proposed in the city of Ahmedabad to address high demand for safe lodging of girls.
- To promote and facilitate doctoral study in Jainism related topics, an advanced study centre for Jainism is proposed to be put-up in the Ahmedabad campus.

To bind all the alumni of SMJV, spread across the globe, in a single thread, the Trust has rolled out an initiative "SMJV Connect", as a link on their website www.smjv.org, which aims at networking and collaborative growth among the entire alumni fraternity.



Living Jain Values: A Path to Inner Peace and Mental Wellness

By: Dr. Ramesh C. Shah



Dr. Ramesh C. Shah is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. He was residency-trained at the Ohio State University and subsequently practiced psychiatry in southern West Virginia for over thirty years. He and his wife, Meenakshi, reside in Shantiniketan, an Indian retirement community located in Tavares, Florida. They are actively involved in Jain activities with the community there. He is the author of a book of his memoirs, "A Journey Through Time and Culture", which is available on Amazon.com. Email: ramesh2shah@gmail.com

Rational perception, knowledge, and conduct of the Jain religion help bring peace and happiness into our way of life. Practicing Jain principles, vows (*Anuvrats*), and curbing passions (*kashays*) such as anger, pride, greed, lust, and delusion helps us navigate each stage of life successfully and with contentment. While many of these principles are reflected in other religions, this article will focus solely on Jain interpretations. I will also share examples of how Jain principles have helped my psychiatric patients and others navigate life's challenges. My psychiatric practice has encompassed patients of all ages and across various settings.

Children's lives typically revolve around home, school, friends, parents, teachers, and coaches. They look up to their parents for guidance and advice. Love, encouragement, and a caring attitude form the foundation upon which they grow into responsible and happy adults. However, with both parents often busy, children spend excessive time on electronic devices, which has been linked to anxiety and depression. Comparisons with peers on academic and extracurricular achievements can also lead to emotional distress.

To counter these destructive behaviors, parents can engage children in healthy activities, such as exercising together to boost natural endorphins (happiness producing hormones) or participating in fun activities as a break before returning to studies. Taking children to Jain temples or pathshalas on weekends helps them absorb values of simplicity, non-jealousy, and contentment, while fostering a sense of community. Since young children may not fully grasp complex concepts like soul and karma, parents can offer concrete guidance, such as "treat people with kindness and share with friends" or "be honest, don't take things from others, and God will be happy with you."

Parents can also reinforce Jain values at home by modeling them consistently. Children observe parental behavior closely, and frequent conflicts or disrespectful interactions can negatively impact them. Yelling and threats may be imitated at school. By maintaining a warm, calm, and empathetic home environment, parents model compromise, patience, and generosity - providing children with a safe refuge from external pressures.

Indian American parents often hold high expectations for their children. While it's important to encourage children to reach their potential, it is equally essential to recognize that each individual has unique capabilities and interests. Unrealistic expectations can result in anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. During such times, children need empathy, encouragement, and practical tools to succeed. During such times, they need the most understanding and love from parents and teachers. Friendships are also crucial at this stage. Conflicts, breakups, or loss of friendships can be emotionally taxing. Parental support plays a vital role in helping children process these experiences. Anxious and depressed children often benefit from guidance on managing relationships and academic pressure. Therapy can provide coping strategies, and family counseling can enhance parenting skills to provide effective support.

Approximately ten to thirty percent of college-aged students experience depressive symptoms due to academic stress, loneliness, or relationship difficulties as they transition into adulthood. Some may turn to alcohol or drugs, which ultimately exacerbate their mental health issues. College counselors and psychiatrists are essential for supporting students, particularly those experiencing suicidal thoughts. These students often struggle with cognitive distortions believing that failure in one subject equates to total failure in life. Counselors help reframe such thoughts, highlighting their strengths,



and parental guidance – contribute significantly to students' resilience. Jain students who attend Jain conferences and gain spiritual knowledge are often better equipped to manage stress and avoid substance abuse. They draw strength from their community, prayer, or the understanding that challenges are temporary and rooted in karma.

Maintaining healthy relationship is a challenge for some students and adults. Jain values such as respect, trust, honesty, selflessness, forgiveness, and care nurture successful relationships. Attending Jain lectures reinforces essential relationship skills, including truthfulness, detachment, active listening, and effective communication.

Alcohol consumption is common among students and adults. Occasional drinking may escalate to severe alcohol dependence leading to impaired judgment, memory loss, and long-term damage to vital organs such as the liver, heart, and brain. It can also weaken bones and impair immunity. Alcohol addiction can result in academic failure, job loss, and strained relationships. Similar risks apply to drug addiction. Jain principles prohibit alcohol and drug use due to their potential to distort thinking and foster dependency. Alongside conventional treatments, Jains can pray to Tirthankars such as Mahavir for self-control. Practicing Jain vows like fasting and other austerities cultivates discipline over cravings, aiding in recovery from addiction.

Ahimsa (non-violence in thought, speech, and action) offers profound benefits. Eating meat constitutes violence against animals and negatively impacts health. Red meat contains fats and cholesterol linked to obesity and heart disease. Indians, who typically have small coronary arteries, are particularly vulnerable to heart issues from high-fat diets. Red meat also increases the risk of colon cancer and strokes. Fish may contain mercury, which poses additional health risks. A balanced vegetarian diet provides essential nutrients while avoiding it. Proteins from soybeans, lentils, non-fat dairy, edamame, and quinoa, along with healthy fats from canola or olive oil, form a nutritious and wholesome diet.

Overconsumption of carbohydrates and sugary foods leads to weight gain and heart disease. Jain teachings encourage restraint and simplicity. Jain dietary practices

and regular physical activity support a healthy body, conducive to meditation and spiritual growth, which in turn foster happiness. Additionally, large-scale livestock farming depletes natural resources and accelerates climate change.

Ahmisa extends to our thoughts and speech. When someone yells at you, Jain teachings encourage understanding their perspective through the principle of Anekantvad (multiple viewpoints) and practicing forgiveness. Responding calmly and seeking compromise fosters harmony and reduces conflict.

Practicing vows like non-possessiveness, truthfulness, and non-stealing provides psychological benefits. Many people equate success with wealth, luxury homes, and expensive cars - often achieved through greed or unethical means. Jainism teaches that greed is insatiable and does not lead to true happiness. Living within one's means, embracing simplicity, and limiting possessions foster a sense of contentment.

Jain principles also advocate for mastering internal emotions such as anger, pride, deceit, attachment, lust, and fear. By letting go of material desires, one can live a balanced, simple life, dedicating more time for family and spirituality. Excess wealth can be donated to monks, nuns, or reputable charities without seeking recognition.

A successful Jain businessman I once spoke with embodied these values. As a senior executive managing over a thousand employees, he prioritized their well-being beyond just salaries. Female employees, for instance, often valued time off for family more than financial raises. He fulfilled these needs, applying the Jain principle of Anekantvad to balance the needs of employees and the corporation. His fairness and empathy earned loyalty and led to his professional success.

Senior Jains often devote their retirement to religious pursuits - visiting temples, performing pujas, attending to discourses, and practicing Preksha meditation. This phase of life offers the opportunity to volunteer, pass on Jain values to grandchildren, and serve the community. These lifelong values and good karmas bring true peace and happiness in the twilight years and help elevate one's spiritual journey toward Moksh.



Historic Meeting of JAINA Leaders with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

By: Bindesh Shah, JAINA President

In a historic and proud moment for the North America Jain community, a delegation of JAINA leaders had the honor of meeting Honorable Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi at his residence in New Delhi on February 26th, 2025. This significant meeting, lasting over 40 minutes, provided an invaluable opportunity to present JAINA's unique organizational virtues, global achievements, and international outreach, while also emphasizing the contributions of the Jain community.



Purpose of the Meeting

The primary aim of this high-profile meeting was to highlight JAINA, an organization run by Shravaks-Shravikas, that defines North American Jain community's non-sectarian approach, collective wisdom, and commitment to various community initiatives. The discussion focused on JAINA's efforts in social welfare, education, cultural preservation, youth engagement, interfaith dialogue, and the preservation of Jain Tirths, particularly in terms of greening and cleaning sacred sites. Also showcased was JAINA Convention activities, benefits to community & special invitation to attend/address NA Jain community. Business & trade aspects were also presented.

Attendees: The meeting was attended by prominent JAINA leaders, including JAINA President Bindesh Shah, Government Liaison Chair Sharad Doshi, JAINA

First Vice President Atul Shah and Hitesh Doshi from Mumbai, India

Their presence underscored the importance of this dialogue and their collective commitment to advancing the community's goals. Token Gifts were exchanged.



PM Modi's Perception of JAINA and Jains

Prime Minister Modi expressed deep respect and admiration for such non-sectarian Jain community, acknowledging their significant contributions to the world at large. He praised JAINA for its efforts in promoting non-violence, compassion, and environmental sustainability, values that resonate deeply with his vision for a harmonious and progressive India.

Issues Presented and Discussed

During the meeting, JAINA leaders presented several key issues and initiatives, including:

- The promotion of Jain educational and cultural programs – Youth exchange, Support for Jain scripture languages like Prakrit, Pali, Sanskrit
- Support for interfaith & engagements with Global Diaspora communities with Indian roots
- Environmental conservation efforts, particularly those aligned with Jain principles of non-violence and respect for all living beings – Jain Pilgrimage cleanup & facilities upgradation
- Strengthening the global network of Jain organizations to foster greater unity and collaboration – Ongoing JAINA engagements with UK, Europe, Middle East, East Africa, Australia-New Zealand Jain diaspora communities



An important milestone of the meeting was the formal invitation to Prime Minister Modi for the upcoming JAINA Convention in Chicago, extended by convention Convener and JAINA First Vice President Atul Shah. Prime Minister Modi expressed his support and assured the delegation of a dedicated channel of assistance during the convention to enhance engagement, promote unity, and development within the global Jain community.



Potential Jain Community Business Engagements

Sharad N. Doshi, Chairperson for Governmental & Public Affairs at JAINA North America, emphasized the long-term vision for expanding US-India trade opportunities for the Jain diaspora, whose entrepreneurial strength can foster deeper economic collaborations by creating new pathways for trade, investment, and business partnerships. He also updated Prime Minister Modi on the new Jain temple being built by the Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington, which will host its Pratishtha Mahotsav in May 2025, to which the Honorable Prime Minister expressed interest in visiting during his future travels.

PM Modi's Initiatives for the Jain Community

During the meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted several past projects his government had taken up for the benefit of Jain communities such as pilgrimage trains, tree planting at Taranga Tirth, and supporting Jain festivals, etc. He also outlined new key initiatives that align with the values and goals of the Jain community.

- **Palitana Tree Planting-Greening Initiative:** PM Modi emphasized the importance of environmental

conservation and requested greening and cleaning of sacred Jain sites, such as Palitana; aiming to create a sustainable and serene environment around these holy places.

- **Youth Engagement:** The Prime Minister underscored the significance of engaging the youth in understanding and appreciating India's rich cultural heritage. He highlighted programs aimed at fostering a deeper connection between young Jains and their roots, encouraging them to participate in cultural preservation and interfaith dialogue. PM presented quiz book about India written by him for inclusion in our Jaina educational curriculum.

These initiatives reflect PM Modi's commitment to supporting the Jain community's efforts in promoting environmental sustainability and cultural preservation, while also fostering greater unity and collaboration within the global Jain diaspora.

A Proud Moment for the JAINA Community

This historic meeting was made possible through the dedicated leadership and strategic efforts of Sharad N. Doshi, along with the invaluable support of the Indian Embassy team. This engagement marks a significant milestone in strengthening ties between the Jain community and the Indian government, fostering greater mutual respect, collaboration, and a shared commitment to societal well-being.

JAINA looks forward to the continued support and active participation of its community members as they work towards building a strong, united, and non-sectarian Jain community that future generations can take pride in, contributing to the vision of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world as one family).

The meeting concluded with a separate meeting of about 25-30 minutes with Hardik Shah, deputy secretary at PMO, New Delhi. Information was exchanged to continue with discussed initiatives. These meetings were indeed a proud moment for JAINA, showcasing their dedication to making a positive impact on the world and reinforcing the strong bond between JAINA and the Indian government.

Do not be pushed by your problems. Be led by your dreams.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson.



Rishabhanath and Mahavir Murtis at the British Museum By: Dhruiti Rathi



Dhruiti is a New Jersey-based MBA, IT and FJAS professional. Dhruiti is Involved with Jainism-Says-Blogspot, she researches Jain Iconography, Epigraphy, Historical and Numismatic references in Jain literature overlooked by historians, and on the applications of Jain principles. Her published work includes Contemporaries of Mahavir, on the dating of Mahavir Nirvana, Yoga and Rishabhadeva and the Niggantha Nataputta of Buddhism. dhruতিরathi@gmail.com

In this issue we feature two Digambara idols in the British Museum, London, UK which are unique in their features and presentation, based on which it is also possible to identify another sculpture at the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California.

In the British Museum, an Orissa temple fragment consists idols of R̥ṣabhanātha and Mahāvīra for which we find the following description: "As is consistent with Jain iconography, the upright and naked figures have broad shoulders and narrow waists. The ascetic nature of R̥ṣabhanātha is suggested by his piled-up and matted hair. The parasols above their heads indicate the royal nature of the two figures." The flowing hair on the shoulders of R̥ṣabhanātha is another feature by which he is identified. Fig 1 depicts an image of these idols.

Fig 1: Fragment of a temple sculpture of R̥ṣabhanātha and Mahāvīra, 11th -12th CE
Asset No: 1872,0701.99 Orissa, India © The Trustees of the British Museum

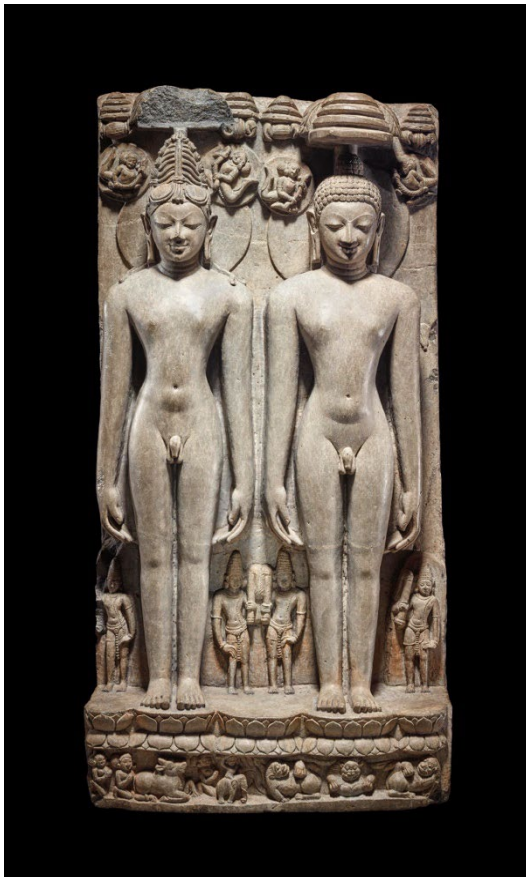


Fig 1 idols are from the Eastern Ganga dynasty. Several interesting features of R̥ṣabhanātha (on the left) are observed. The bottom shows two people worshipping, the Gomukha Yaksh on elephant and the *lānchhans* bull for R̥ṣabhanātha and lion for Mahāvīra. The idols are standing in the *Kāyotsarga* position on lotus petals, and being naked are identified as Digambara idols. The universal monarch or *Chakravarti* can be identified by the crown or royal parasols (now broken). R̥ṣabhanātha is also known as *Dharma Chakravarti*, the initiator of the Jain religion, often depicted through the wheel of Dharma in the center bottom as shown in Fig 2, 3, and 4.



Fig 2 Buddha, Caves of Ellora (6th-10th CE) Painting by William Simpson (1872), Victoria & Albert Museum.

Simpson misidentified the Ellora idol as a statue of Buddha. He notes: "This is a depiction of a very unusual Buddha. The wheel which forms part of the throne, suggests a curious likeness to the wheel of Ezekiel. The wheel is a great symbol of Buddha and one of his titles is Chkravarta Rajah,

which is "King of the Wheel." However, the Victoria & Albert Museum rightly

corrected it as the idol of R̥ṣabhanātha from the absence of clothing, the hairs on the shoulders, and the initiator of *Jin Dharma* (chakra wheel) at the bottom. Similar misidentification of R̥ṣabhanātha as Buddha is observed in the object in Fig 3. As noted in 1828, in the will of the original buyer Charles Stuart, this idol is mentioned as Buddha, when clearly the symbol of bull is observed on the cloth fold, which is the sign of R̥ṣabhanātha. The British Museum has rectified the same and identifies it as an image of Rishabhadeva.



Victoria & Albert Museum states for Fig 4: “The wheel of law (Dharmachakra) at the centre of the throne is an emblem of his role as a Jina. He sits in meditation pose. The throne is supported by lions, with standing figures of Chauri (Fly-Whisk) bearers on each side. Above, two celestial garland-bearers venerate him and a celestial drummer sits on the honorific triple umbrella.” These instances highlight the fact that earlier scholars considered Jainism as part of orthodox Buddhism, leading to several incorrect identifications and misrepresentation of Jainism. Hence, during the early 19th century Jainism art objects and traditions have been confused with Buddhist traditions and continue to be misunderstood even now by many.



Fig 3 (Rishabhadeva) Sandstone, Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh 11th century CE Accession Number:1872,0701.98
© The Trustees of the British Museum



Fig 4 Jina Rishabhanatha, 9th century CE
Uttar Pradesh, India Accession Number: IS.12-1996
Victoria & Albert Museum



Fig 5 Digambara Jina with Celestial Attendants, The Norton Simon Museum
Copyright: © The Norton Simon Foundation
Accession Number: F.1978.26.S
c. 1000 Asia: India, State of Karnataka

Figure of a lion is noticed in the base of Fig 5 Digambara Jina with Celestial Attendants and remains currently unidentified. We observe that the lion in Fig 5 is similar to the lion in Fig 1. As the British Museum identifies the idol with lion as depicting Mahāvīra in Fig 1, it can be ascertained that the idol of Digambara Jina at the Norton Simon Museum is also the idol of Mahāvīra.

Interesting feature of Mahāvīra in Fig 1 is the raised *uṣhṇisha* observed on top of the head, a feature popularly associated with the images of the Buddha. That the sculptor in Fig 1 is clearly depicting Jain idols is evident from its posture and nakedness. Thus, Digambara Jain Tirthankars had raised *uṣhṇisha* in the 6th to 12th century CE sculptures from Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Also, we observe that Rṣabhanātha then was depicted by a *Dharma chakra*, being the initiator of the Jain religion or starting the wheel of *Jin dharma*, the religion of the Jinas.

The author is grateful to The Norton Simon Museum, The British Museum, and The Victoria & Albert Museum for free use of licensed images.



Appa: Empowering 41000 Women with Employment and Education

By: Rajendra Kumar Jain, Murugan Nellyappan



Rajendra Jain is a JAINA Director and a trustee of the International Jain Sangh, NJ. He is Co-Founder and CEO of Qmart International Inc. Prior to that he worked for 20 years with Bell Labs/AT&T. Raj has an eMBA from Wharton School of Business, PA and AT&T School of Business in Finance and Business Management. He is Information Section Editor of Jain Digest.

One day, a young girl working in a textile mill approached the owner and said, "Appa, I want to study. My parents pulled me out of school because of poverty, but I want to study further." One would think that a simple request like this would either be brushed off or at most motivate the owner to help this one girl and move on. But not K.P. Ramasamy. Moved by the young girl's plea, Ramasamy found himself transported back 25 years to his own struggles. He had been forced to leave college and return to his village because his father, a farmer, couldn't afford to educate all four sons.



Inspired, Ramasamy thought not only of helping the young girl, but all the women working in his mill. He turned to his brothers and the management team with a simple yet profound question: "Why shouldn't we educate the young women in our factories who are interested in studying?"

This innovative idea took hold. Soon a correspondence program was arranged for around 50 women workers at KPR Mill. Their enthusiasm and success in clearing their +2 examinations with flying colors reaffirmed Ramasamy's belief. Beaming with pride, Ramasamy, whom his employees affectionately call 'Appa' (father), declared "Let's do this every year!"

Who is K.P. Ramasamy?

Born in 1949, K.P. Ramasamy, known as 'KPR', is the owner of KPR Mill, one of Coimbatore's largest and most successful textile companies. Originating from an agricultural family, Ramasamy borrowed ₹8,000 from his mother's uncle in 1971 and began his career as a power

loom cloth manufacturer. With the able and emphatic support of his younger brothers, Ramasamy gradually expanded into a fully integrated textile and garment business. Today, KPR Mill is one of the leading textile manufacturers in India, known for its employee-centric approach and global presence.

Beyond being a very successful entrepreneur, all through strenuous and enduring efforts, he is also an environmentalist and a philanthropist. He installed several windmills; established Co-gen cum Sugar Plant and Solar Power Plants to source green power to meet most of KPR's power requirements. His 'KPR Charities', a Public Trust that supports social welfare activities and runs education institutions.

Ramasamy's accomplishments have been recognized with multiple awards; such as a 'Star of India' award from the hands of former Prime Minister of India Shri Deva Gowda and conferring on him the 'Doctorate, D.Litt. (Honoris Causa)' by the renowned Kalinga University, Odisha.

Empowering Women

While Ramasamy has certainly built a thriving business empire, his true legacy lies in how he has transformed the lives of his workers, particularly the women in his mill. In an era where corporate leaders are often focused solely on profits, cost-cutting, and employee retention, Ramasamy has chosen a different path—one rooted in human empowerment and education.





What started after the plea by a young girl as an initiative for a handful of workers, blossomed into a transformative movement. Today, over 41,000 women have completed their education while working at KPR Mill. Some have gone on to become nurses, others have joined IT firms, and many have returned to KPR Mill, enriched with new skills and confidence.



Many women from several states in India have come to KPR Mill to work and get higher education. They work for 8 hours and then attend 4 hours of classes. The company takes care of them like a family member. They get good food, lodging, books, and all other facilities to complete their studies. Through yoga and meditation, they are able to stay healthy and happy. The women study for varying courses starting with 10th, 12, Graduate, and Post Graduate degrees. The women are also offered computer (IT) education, IAS training, and vocational training courses such as Teacher Training, Tailoring, Nursing, etc.



At KPR Mill, the women who could not continue their education for a variety of reasons, get a new lease on life as they work and earn a living for themselves and their families. It is a sanctuary where the seeds of potential are sown, watered with compassion, and allowed to blossom into lives of dignity and

empowerment. From being a school dropout in a remote village to becoming an IAS aspirant is not just a dreamy story but a reality happening right in the workplace where thousands transform themselves. This is the real sharing of wealth. Giving the employees a little bit more salary or bonus would have made them happier for the present. But Ramasamy had a dream and the vision to enlighten them with knowledge.

A Humanitarian Approach to Business

One might question why a business owner would invest in training employees for higher education when it could lead to higher attrition, possibly jeopardizing production and profits. For Ramasamy, the welfare of his employees was more important. His philosophy was simple: "Satisfied, happy employees are better performers. If you take care of them they will take care of you. It's a win-win." He also believes that such caring has to come from the heart. Humanity has to be the driving force.

This belief guided the company even during the Covid-19 pandemic. While factories across India sent workers home, KPR Mill made a bold decision: they gave employees a choice. If they stayed, the company would provide food, shelter, full salary, and entertainment. Each of their 12 factories had a cinema hall, sports facilities, and an auditorium. The result? "100 percent of the people said we will stay here only," Ramasamy recalls proudly. While other factories struggled with labor shortages for months after the lockdown, KPR Mill bounced back to full efficiency within a week.

A Legacy of Inspiration: Seeds of Hope

K.P. Ramasamy's legacy is one of inspiration, a testament to the transformative power of compassion and vision. He has sown seeds of hope in the hearts of countless women, nurturing their dreams and empowering them to build brighter futures. His work at KPR Mill serves as a shining example of corporate social responsibility, a beacon illuminating the path for others to follow.

Sources: Pictures - courtesy of KPR Mill website

<https://kprmilllimited.com/mr-k-p-ramasamy/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E62pEbq2DxM>

https://youtu.be/qquWwT_IdEA?t=40

<https://bit.ly/4kKGEN2> (Businesstoday.in article)



Finding Stillness in the Storms - The Inspirational Journey of Steven Webb

By: Payal Seth



Payal Seth, is working as an economist with Pahle India Foundation in New Delhi. She is also a passionate author who crafts illuminating articles, dedicated to exploring and celebrating the profound significance of spiritual values in our modern lives. Her articles have been published on several national and international platforms. payalseth1309@gmail.com

"I have always just been someone who thinks, 'let's just get on with it', and having that mindset has helped me."

– Steven Webb

Like all of our brothers and sisters, we too face adversities. One of the ways that helps me during these adverse times is to read the life stories of spiritual giants like the Buddha, Mahavir, and Jesus, among others, and how they handled these times. But I am also equally struck by the compassion and spiritual maturity that arise out of seemingly ordinary people who went through some of the worst times. I recently came across another such inspiring story. In the vast landscape of human resilience, few stories shine as brightly as that of Steven Webb. His journey is not merely one of survival but of profound transformation that is a testament to the unyielding strength of the human spirit. In this article, we discuss his life journey and some of the key practices that have helped him cope with life.



A Life Transformed by Adversity

Steven Webb grew up in Cornwall, UK. His life was nothing short of a roller coaster, so much so that he could have starred in another awesome movie franchise of *The Series of Unfortunate Events*. When I read his life story, I didn't know what was more tragic - a messy divorce of his parents when he was 7, or being homeless soon afterwards, or getting diagnosed with dyslexia at 10 and ADHD soon after, or losing a grandparent that he was close to due to suicide at 12. But then I realised that the

worst was yet to come - an accident in the swimming pool that left him severely paralyzed from the chest down with limited arm function and no hand movement. The roller coaster ride after the accident also included being cheated on, losing the business, and going bankrupt.

And it was at that point in his life that Steven decided to find his own Inner Peace. In his e-Book "How to find your Inner Peace", he tells us about 5 practices that he learned that gave him calmness, serenity and peace. These practices gave him the ability to stay calm and in control when things go wrong. We will go over the practices briefly in the following paragraphs; but first let us see how Steven defines what Inner Peace is.

What is Inner Peace?

According to Steven having Inner Peace as living from the heart instead of the constant story in your mind. Our mind is made up of all our opinions, beliefs, and the experiences we've had since even before we were born. When you live from your heart you start to live below all this mental chatter. Instead of constantly jumping into your habitual reaction, you respond with wisdom. You gain control over your emotions and your thoughts, which reduces anxiety, and ultimately you have control of any situation.

So Inner Peace means responding wisely when things go wrong, living with gratitude, while still having desires. Ultimately, it is about becoming the hero of our story.

Five Practices to find Inner Peace

1) Meditation

A large part of Inner Peace is being able to respond rather than react; to have that calmness, wisdom and clarity when everything seems to be going wrong. Normally in situations when we are triggered, we immediately jump to a habitual reaction which then immediately turns to shame, guilt, anger, or fear and quite often makes the situation worse. Meditation gives



us the ability and the strength needed to break those habits and respond with wisdom, so we don't regret our automatic reaction later, after we have calmed down.

There are many types of meditations, and each one has benefits depending on what we are going through in life. For Inner Peace, Steven recommends focus or concentration meditation. This is where we pick one of our senses and focus on it for a certain amount of time. Focusing on breath is one of the most common practices.

2) Sleeping

If you want to live life to the full, live up to the best of your potential and enjoy every moment with Inner Peace, you need to be awake! A good sleeping practice is almost as important as meditation. Not having a good sleeping practice will inhibit your ability to receive the full potential of what meditation can bring to your life.

In his e-book, Steven explains why sleep is important and gives detailed instructions on how to get better sleep. He also has created a 60-minute guided meditation audio. (<https://stevenwebb.com/sleep>)

3) Mindfulness

Steven describes Mindfulness as living in the present moment, being aware of what's happening without judging or labelling it in a positive or negative way. From his own experience, he was able to decipher that often our reaction is so quick that we never even realize that there was a choice. This is where meditation, mindfulness and daily practice will build a new neuropathway, so we have that brief gap in which to make a healthy decision, make a choice, rather than just simply reacting like we have in the past.

4) Gratitude

Living with gratitude and more importantly feeling the gratitude for what you already have, ranging from the big items like your home right down to your toothbrush gives you a sense of real appreciation. He encourages people to focus on three new things every morning that we are grateful for, and then focus on people who enrich our lives and send feelings of love and gratitude.

5) Nonattachment

Inner peace is often disrupted by our attachments - especially our attachment to happiness. From childhood, we are conditioned to seek happiness in external things like gifts, relationships, and achievements. However,

these sources of happiness are fleeting, leading us into a cycle of constantly chasing the next thing that promises fulfilment. Even in the spiritual journey, we can become attached to the pursuit of enlightenment or nonattachment itself. True inner peace comes not from eliminating desires but from freeing ourselves from attachment to them. We can still enjoy life's experiences without letting them define our sense of self. Nonattachment also applies to our thoughts and emotions. Instead of identifying with feelings of anxiety, loneliness, or sadness, we can learn to observe them as temporary states rather than fixed aspects of our identity.

These practices, described in more details in his e-book, have helped Steven navigate his own struggles and to guide others on their journey to find inner peace. Today, Steven is a renowned meditation teacher, writer, and speaker, offering wisdom drawn from his own experiences to help others overcome their own storms.



A Life of Service and Impact

Beyond his commitment to mindfulness, Steven has also devoted himself to public service. As a Truro City Councillor since 2017 and a former Mayor of Truro (2021-2023), he has worked tirelessly to uplift his community and help others find their path to peace. His ability to lead with compassion and resilience showcases that true leadership comes from within.

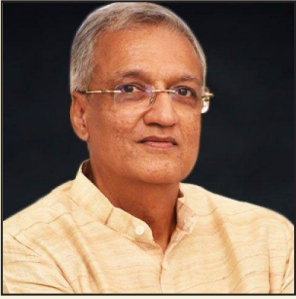
As we face our own storms, may we recall Steven's words:

"When we stop taking things personally and stop thinking we are the centre of the story, that's when the calmness arrives. The Inner Peace that you are searching for has always been there all along, buried underneath. We need to slow down and drop below all the thinking, listen to our hearts and become present without attachment. Can you simply sit and listen without judgement and without labelling what is arising? After a little practice, it is very possible."



The Wealth Trap - How I Learned to Break Free

By: Ajay Sheth



Ajay Sheth is a Trustee of the Quest Foundation and publisher/editor of the Ma Swami Prerna magazine. He has dedicated his life to serving others and making a positive impact in the world. But what truly sets Ajay apart is his commitment to being a practitioner of Effortless Awareness. He has mastered the art of living in the present moment, letting go of ego and conditioning, and embracing life with an open heart and mind. Through his Effortless Awareness practice, Ajay has cultivated a profound sense of inner peace, compassion, and wisdom. He radiates a warm and loving energy, touching the lives of all those around him. As he continues on his journey of self-discovery and service, Ajay inspires others to embrace their path of effortless awareness, reminding us that being a true human being means living a life of authenticity, love, and freedom.

Growing up in a lower-middle-class family, I was consumed by the desire to be rich and wealthy. I believed that money could buy everything, including prestige, power, and happiness. I observed how the rich and mighty flaunted their wealth and seemed to get away with anything, using their money power to manipulate and control. This fueled my determination to earn money at any cost.

As I grew older, the injustices suffered by the hands of the wealthy only strengthened my resolve. My parents and spiritual guru, PP Acharya Narendramuni MS, cautioned me that money and wealth were a curse, the root of all evils. They warned that wealth would bring fleeting power and temporary happiness, but ultimately lead to trouble. I couldn't grasp this concept at the time, and my desire for wealth only intensified.

I lost faith in ethics and religion, convinced that they were mere obstacles to achieving my goal. As I progressed in life, accumulating wealth and material possessions, I began to realize that neither my own pursuit of wealth nor the warnings of my elders were entirely accurate.

I discovered that the more I earned, the more I wanted. This insatiable desire for wealth was a paradox. The Principle of Marginal Utility states that the more we have of something, the less we desire it. But with wealth, the opposite seemed true. The more I had, the more I craved.

It wasn't until I met my spiritual guide, PP Acharya JayVijayaji MS, (Ma Swami), that I began to understand the paradox of wealth. She revealed to me that nothing, including money, is inherently bad. It's our attachment Moha to it that's the problem. She taught me that everyone must work to earn a living,

but it's our attachment and aversion that lead to unhappiness.

She explained that the key to breaking free from the wealth trap is to cultivate equanimity. *"Earn money ethically",* she advised, *"and use it for two purposes: either for your own betterment and enjoyment or to help those in need. Simply accumulating wealth without a higher purpose is futile."*

Somehow, I felt compelled to give it a try; and believe me, a small incident within a few weeks changed my life forever. I normally stayed at the Gondal Palace Hotel (a small town near Rajkot in Gujarat, India) while visiting Ma Swami. One day, while exiting the hotel, my car stopped near the gate due to heavy traffic. A young girl, 12-13 years old, with a small boy of 5 years in her arm, knocked on the car window. When I opened the window, she begged for some food for herself and her young brother, as they had not eaten since morning.

Normally, I would have scorned at her, but remembering Ma Swami's advice, I gave her a plastic bag containing some bananas, biscuits, and bottled water meant for my lunch. Due to the heavy traffic, the car was still not moving, and she knocked on my window again. I got a little irritated and opened the window scornfully, as I hated beggars. But what happened next changed my life forever.

Instead of asking for something more, she returned my plastic bag, saying, *"Saheb, I have taken two bananas and a packet of biscuits for me and my brother. We can drink tap water. You take back this bag, or else you will go hungry."* I felt truly ashamed of myself. For the first time in my life, I realized who was truly rich and who was damn poor. Once this realization dawned on me, it was easy going.



I started keeping notes of Rs. 2,000 (a valid note at that time) and giving them to needy and poor people whenever I found them. The mere expression of shock, excitement, astonishment, gratitude, etc. on their faces, made me more resolute to give back more and more to the poor and needy of the society.

I can go on and on, narrating lots of life-changing experiences, from giving support to physically handicapped children, supporting someone in education, medical and vocational training needs, or even helping someone to stand on their own legs. One such emotional incident is quite appropriate to narrate here.

We, at Quest Foundation, had decided to encourage and enroll unemployed young ones to start learning driving, plumbing, carpentry, mobile repairing, etc. We paid their fees directly to the institutes that offered such training.

Post-Covid, one day when I was waiting for a cab, a driver approached me to give me a ride and also offered a return trip. When I asked about the fare at the end of the trip, he informed me that he was blessed that I had sat in his car, as our Foundation was instrumental in sending him to driving school. He also shared that he now owns three cabs, and both his daughters are studying in business school.

These experiences transformed my life. I no longer earn money like a crazy person, driven by an insatiable desire for more. Instead, I enjoy my wealth, using it to improve my life and the lives of others. The process of giving has helped me detach from my wealth, reducing my greed and increasing my sense of contentment.

As I look back, I realize that my attachment to wealth led me down a path of dishonesty and deception. But by breaking free from the wealth trap, I've found peace, happiness, and a sense of purpose.

The concept of the Easterlin Paradox, which suggests that beyond a certain point, additional wealth does not lead to greater happiness, resonates deeply with me. I've come to understand that true happiness and fulfillment come not from accumulating wealth, but from living a life of purpose, compassion, and connection.

In fact, research has shown that once basic needs are met, additional wealth does not necessarily lead to greater happiness. This is known as the "Hedonic Treadmill" – an idea that we constantly strive for more, but never quite reach a state of lasting satisfaction.

So, how can we break free from the wealth trap? How can we cultivate a healthier relationship with money and wealth? Here are some guidelines:

1) **It is essential to recognize that wealth is a means, not an end.** It's a tool that can be used to improve our lives and the lives of others, but it's not the ultimate goal.

2) **We must cultivate a sense of gratitude and contentment.** By focusing on what we already have, rather than what we lack, we can reduce our desire for more and find happiness in the present moment.

3) **We must learn to give.** Giving to others, whether it's our time, money, or resources, can help us detach from our wealth and find a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

4) **We must practice mindfulness and self-reflection.** By being aware of our thoughts and emotions, we can recognize when we're falling into the wealth trap and take steps to break free.

5) **We must cultivate a sense of compassion and empathy.** By recognizing that everyone struggles with the wealth trap, we can create a supportive community that encourages and motivates each other to break free.

In conclusion, wealth is neither a blessing nor a curse. It's how we view it, use it, and attach ourselves to it that determines its impact on our lives. By cultivating equanimity, gratitude, contentment, generosity, mindfulness, and compassion, we can break free from the wealth trap and find true happiness and fulfillment.

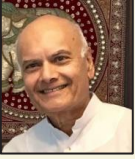
As the saying goes, "The best wealth is to live content with little." By embracing this mindset, we can create a more just, equitable, and compassionate society, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and find happiness.

"Giving to others, whether it's our time, money or resources, can help us detach from our wealth."



How to Stop Suffering and Create Our Own Happiness

By: Ramesh Khandhar



Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of the executive board and past head teacher of Pathshala at Jain Center of Southern California. He travels around to deliver spiritual discourses and continues to do intense introspection and contemplation. Currently, he is serving as Section Editor and Advisor of Jain Digest. (ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com)

Jay is a project manager in a large corporation. He has been working there for ten years. He loves his job and his contribution to the organization's success has been well recognized in the past. Last year he started reporting to a new manager. Jay worked even harder to make sure his manager's expectations were met.

When the time of his annual performance review came, Jay was expecting a good review. However, that did not happen. Instead of giving Jay credit for the good job Jay had done, the manager pointed out small deficiencies in his work. Jay felt really bad about this. He felt sad and got angry. He could not understand why his manager treated him so badly.

Think about how you would feel in such a situation. Most of us would feel the same way. But what is the real cause behind Jay's suffering? Is it the manager or something else? Let's explore this.

The Cause and Effect Relationship

One of the universal laws is: *For every effect, there is a cause.* Touch a hot stove – your fingers burn. Hold ice – your hand chills. In these cases, blaming the fire or the ice would be pointless. The effect naturally follows the cause.

The same applies to various situations in our life. In the above example, it does appear that Jay's sadness and anger was caused by his manager, but the real reason is Jay's expectation of a good review. The fact remains that he got a review that he did not expect (cause), but how to react or feel about it (effect) was up to Jay.

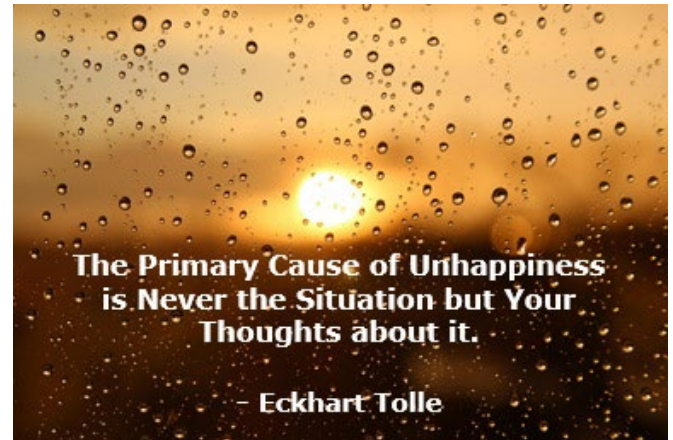
Going deeper still, Jain philosophy teaches us that such events are not random. They are the fruition of past karmic causes. The event is the 'effect' of causes Jay had sown in the past. The role of external instrument is explained by *nimit-naimitik* principle. The event itself is fruit of the karma Jay created through past actions. Jay's manager is only Nimit (instrumental cause) who simply acted as a vehicle for

the karmic result to manifest. Jay remains responsible for his reaction which is independent of the event.

Hence it is important for us to understand the cause-effect relationship properly. With such knowledge, we will be able to not get influenced by our emotions and stay calm in every interaction and situation. With proper understanding and introspection of our reactions and feelings, we can choose to be happy.

What Makes us Unhappy?

First thing we need to realize is that our mind is conditioned from our past experiences, our past *sanskars*. Think about a phrase we use: 'gloomy weather'. Is there such a thing? Weather is just the result of natural forces. We call it gloomy because we *feel* that way.



From childhood, we are conditioned to blame external circumstances for our unhappiness. The flight is delayed? The airline is at fault. Got a flat tire? The roads are terrible. The dinner is not ready? He or she does not care for me; etc. etc. You get the picture. In short, we are expert at creating our own unhappiness. We have mastered the art of externalizing blame, rarely introspecting on our own inner causes.

Our ego strengthens this habit. In arguments, we often prefer being 'right' over maintaining peace. We



validate our own sense of superiority even at the cost of loving relationships. However, true suffering arises not because of what happens, but because of our mental conditioning, resistance to reality, and ignorance of the deeper cause-effect and *nimit-naimitik* relationships.

How to Create Our Own Happiness

1. Learn from Spiritual Masters and Contemplate

Jain spiritual masters teach that whatever happens in our life is a result of past causes we have created. Reality unfolds according to past karmic influences, and it cannot be changed. It simply means we must reap the fruits of the seeds we had sown in the past. Suffering arises when we resist reality and demand that it matches our expectations. If we accept situations as they are, without resistance, we remain peaceful and equanimous.

Jain philosophy provides two guiding principles to illustrate the cause-effect relationship:

- *Bhogve teni bhul* – He who suffers is at fault.
- *Banyu te nyaay* – What happens is in accordance with the law of cause and effect.

This means that whatever we are experiencing today is a result of our own past actions - not someone else's doing. By internalizing this truth, we stop blaming external factors and start taking responsibility for our own peace of mind. Even Lord Mahavir, the epitome of nonviolence, endured suffering because of past karmic causes. Nails were driven into his ears by a cowherd because of his own past deeds. (*In his birth as a Tripushtha Vasudev, he had poured hot lead in his servant's ears.*) However, even in such painful situation, Lord Mahavir did not react — he remained in pure awareness, beyond suffering.

Our ego and false beliefs keep us trapped in the illusion that others are responsible for our emotional reactions. Reactive thoughts and its labeling (good or bad) make them sticky and will remain in our subconscious mind. Also, they strengthen our emotional reactive attitude which will cause more suffering in the future.

2. Develop Awareness through Daily Introspection

When we introspect deeply, we realize that our ignorance of the cause-effect relationship is what fuels our emotional reactions. Our habitual tendencies

- formed over many lifetimes - keep us trapped in cycles of suffering. This ignorance also leads to karmic bondage, which shapes our future experiences. In order to break free from suffering, we need to go over the daily events in our life where we may have felt emotionally challenging. Try to understand the root cause. Through self-inquiry, we must ask: *What beliefs am I holding onto that cause me to react this way?* Identify the emotional baggage we carry – ego, anger, jealousy, superiority or inferiority complexes, resentment, vengeful attitudes, etc. This will help to increase our alertness towards such events to stay calm and unaffected.

3. Develop an Attitude of Acceptance and Equanimity

Once we understand the cause-effect relationship, our perspective shifts. Instead of asking, “Why did this happen to me?”, we begin to see, “It happened for a reason.” With acceptance of reality as it is, without resistance, our mind calms down. We also realize that it is futile to think about “What if” scenarios. We then tend to stay in the present and are able to decide on any future actions in a rational manner.

Such acceptance of both pleasant and unpleasant situations without resistance and perceiving the situation ‘as it is’ and not ‘as it should be’ on a daily basis we develop the virtue of Equanimity and advance spiritually.

Conclusion

Life will always bring challenges. People will say hurtful words, unexpected situations will arise, and things will not always go according to our desires. But if we remain rooted in awareness, knowing that everything is unfolding as per our past karma, we will not be disturbed. Instead of resisting what is, we will accept life with grace, knowing that peace is not dependent on external events - it is cultivated within.

The beauty of Jain philosophy is that it empowers us with choice. We are not bound to repeat old mistakes. At any moment, we can stop creating new causes of suffering and walk the path of wisdom, compassion, and non-attachment. True peace of mind is not found in changing the world around us but in changing how we perceive and respond to the world. By understanding and applying the cause-effect principle in our daily life, we transcend suffering and move forward on the spiritual path leading toward enlightenment.



Swayamni Prayogshala - A Journey of Self-Discovery in Shree Pavapuri Tirth

By: Hema Pokharna



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Shree Pavapuri Tirth: A Sacred Sanctuary

I had the privilege of attending the "Swayamni Prayogshala" workshop, led by Shri Dipakbhai Shah (Bardoliwala), also known as "Swadhyay Ratna". This five-day retreat, held from December 14th to 18th, 2024, was an invitation to embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and spiritual growth within the sacred container of Pavapuri's natural environment. This article explores the unique experience of engaging in introspection, self-reflection, and spiritual growth through a mix of lectures, bhakti, music, discussions, and meditation.



The energetic serene sanctuary of Pavapuri, with its magnificent temples, shrines, and monuments, provided the perfect backdrop for our spiritual exploration. The town's many temples, including the Parshwanath temple and Jal Mandir, are prominent landmarks showcasing Jainism's rich cultural heritage. Jal Mandir, dedicated to Lord Mahavira, features intricate carvings and sculptures that highlight Jain artistry and craftsmanship.

The Transformative Workshop

As we gathered in the forest, surrounded by the majesty of nature, I was reminded of the profound significance of

trees in the journey of spiritual growth. Lord Mahavira attained *Keval Gyan*, the ultimate state of enlightenment, under the shade of a tree. This ancient wisdom underscores the importance of nature in facilitating spiritual growth leading to self-realization and liberation. Dipakbhai's wisdom and celestial singing, accompanied by melodious music, valuable insights and practical guidance, creating a supportive environment for participants to explore and navigate their spiritual journeys.



The workshop focused exclusively on the *Pathshala Granth*, written by Param Pujya Acharya Shri Pradyumna Soorishwarji Maharaj. By emphasizing introspection, self-reflection, and spiritual growth, the workshop deepened our understanding of Jain philosophy and its application in daily life. It provided a core understanding of oneself and the world by enhancing self-awareness and self-connection, ultimately striving for liberation.

Each morning, we had the privilege of participating in sacred rituals at the temples, including *prakshal*, *vastakshap pooja*, and *nav-angi pooja*. These devotional practices set the tone for a day of introspection and spiritual growth.



In the evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon, we gathered under the starry winter sky for an enchanting evening of bhakti. The cool winter air, twinkling stars, and soulful music blended harmoniously, creating an atmosphere that transcended words. Such moments are truly ineffable - they can only be experienced, not merely described.

Throughout the workshop, Dipakbhai's teachings and guidance provided a profound understanding of the importance of self-awareness and introspection. His emphasis on recognizing and embracing our true nature resonated deeply. The uniqueness of this spiritual gathering was the forest setting, which served as a sacred container for spiritual growth.

One of the most impressive aspects of the workshop was the emphasis on eco-friendliness and sustainability. All decorations, materials, and arrangements used during the workshop were made from natural and biodegradable elements, ensuring minimal environmental impact. From the intricate flower arrangements to the sacred ritual items, every detail was carefully considered to promote harmony with nature. This thoughtful approach not only reflected the principles of Jainism but also served as a powerful reminder of our responsibility to protect the environment.

The Energetic Container: Nature's Wisdom

The sessions were held amidst the *amala* forest, where we embraced tranquility and connected with nature. Immersing ourselves in its stillness, we experienced a deep sense of serenity. Surrounded by the majesty of nature, feelings of gratitude naturally arose - gratitude for the trees that provide oxygen and for their beauty that nurtures the spirit.

Dipakbhai's sermons reminded us to appreciate the daily gifts that nature bestows. Scientific studies have shown that exposure to natural environments improves working memory, cognitive flexibility, and attention control, while urban environments are linked to attention deficits.

In our busy, technology-driven lives, finding moments of peace and solace is a rare treat. Being in the forest was a meditative and contemplative experience, encouraging a profound connection with the natural world and a deeper bond with ourselves.

The *Pathshala granth* is a testament to the Acharya's profound love and respect for nature. He often spent hours in forests encouraging his followers to experience nature's wisdom by embracing silence, listening, and

observing. The *granth* is replete with stories and lessons drawn from nature, inviting readers to cultivate mindfulness and presence, free from judgment.



As we immersed ourselves in the natural beauty of Jeev Maitridham, Dipakbhai underscored the Jain teaching that we don't live in isolation; but our lives are sustained by all the life around us. This newfound appreciation inspired me to recognize the interconnectedness of all living beings and that we can cultivate a deeper sense of awareness, compassion, and purpose.

Swayamni Prayogshala's focus on nature and its wisdom was a powerful reminder of the importance of reconnecting with nature. As we navigate modern complexities, it becomes clear that our disconnection from nature has contributed to our spiritual disconnection. Dipakbhai's teachings reinforced the necessity of self-awareness and introspection. His emphasis on recognizing and embracing our true nature resonated deeply.

As we explored the teachings of the *granth* and the *Panch Sutra*, we began to understand the significance of cultivating awareness and compassion in daily life. Being in the forest, we became attuned to the sights, sounds, and sensations of nature -- the rustling leaves, chirping birds, and fragrant earth became anchors to the present moment.

We allowed the embodiment of nature's divinity, beauty, and serenity to retreat within, heal, and become whole again. A great gateway to self-reflection was sitting on the ground in the restful embrace of the trees. The combination of celestial music and bhakti, symphony of natural sounds, vibrant colors of foliage, and the textures of the forest floor awakened our senses in a way that urban environments seldom do.



As I felt the wind rustle through my hair and listened to the *Jinvani* flow through Dipakbhai's words, I experienced an inexplicable yet profound connection with myself. As I share this experience, I wonder how I can fully capture the diverse benefits that go hand in hand with time spent outdoors where great souls have walked, and their vibrations can still be felt. Spending time in nature not only has cognitive, but also emotional, and existential benefits that transcend words. The stunning temples of Pavapuri further enriched this experience, embodying a beauty that must be felt rather than described.

A passage from the granth described how, under Acharyaji's guidance, the abhishek of Adhinath Bhagwan was performed to invite rain during the scorching heat of *Magsar Mah*. The ceremony was meticulous, with sacred elements gathered from auspicious rivers. And as the abhishek progressed, dark clouds formed, a cool breeze carried the scent of rain, and unexpected showers filled everyone with joy and *Bhakti Bhav*.

This miracle underscored the profound connection between our inner world and nature. Our ancestors relied on intuition to interpret the signs of nature for survival, predicting weather through changing skies or animal behavior. Even today our intuition interacts with nature, reminding us that we are deeply interconnected with the world around us.

By learning to tap into our intuition and paying attention to nature's lessons, we cultivate a deeper understanding of ourselves and our place within the vast web of life. Moving through life with greater awareness and harmony becomes possible when we recognize this bond.

Reflections: A Journey of Self-Discovery

One of the most poignant experiences during the workshop was the recitation of the *Panch Sutra*, accompanied by Dipakbhai's soulful rendition of its original lyrics and *chhand*. This ancient text, written by Shri Haribhadradasuriji Maharaj, serves as a timeless guide for spiritual growth. Its three-fold approach – seeking shelter in the four supreme entities, condemning bad deeds, and appreciating good deeds – provides a powerful framework for transcending delusion and karmic bondage.

Another exciting part of the gathering was the saintly presence of Kavi Shri Rajendra Shukla, a dear friend and

contemporary of Acharyaji. His Kavi Shri's presence, wisdom, and appearance was like that of a Rishi, nourished and nurtured in nature. Kavi Shri's presence was a testament to the profound impact of nature on the human spirit. His wisdom, gleaned from years of introspection and connection with the natural world, reminded us that true growth and self-realization come from embracing our place within the web of life. His expressions and analogies were integrated in the simplicity and beauty of nature, and his ability to tease any word to its origin and give it contextual depth. Dipakbhai's thoughtful questions allowed Kavi Shri's wisdom to flow freely, creating a heartfelt and magical experience.

As I departed Pavapuri, I felt the sacred container's energy still resonating within me. The experience had awakened a deeper sense of connection – to nature, to myself, and to the world. I knew this journey would stay with me forever, guiding me toward a more mindful, compassionate, and purpose-driven life. As I reflect and savor this extraordinary experience, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and to connect and experience our intuitive compass. This workshop was a source of guidance, inspiration, wisdom, and encouraging pointers to self-realization. I encourage everyone to embark on their own journey of self-discovery and to nurture a deeper connection with nature. For in doing so, we can unlock the secrets of the universe and discover our true potential.

As we await the next workshop, from November 20-24, 2025, at Shree Pavapuri Tirth-Jeev Maitridham, initiate your own *Prayogshala*. The next time you step outside, pause and feel the wind, listen to the river, soak in the sun, witness the changing seasons, stand in awe of a forest, or gaze up at the night sky. Let nature's wisdom seep into your consciousness and see how it deepens your intuition and understanding of the world.

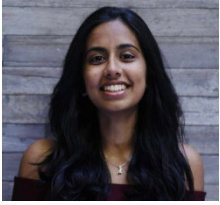
This transformative experience was made possible by the workshop's gift economy principle, where participants contributed voluntarily, fostering generosity and trust. This approach embodied Jain values of compassion, reciprocity, and interconnectedness.

Link to 5 High quality highlights videos of the workshop:

<https://bit.ly/Swayamni Prayogshala 2024 Highlights>



Jainism and AI: An Ethics Exploration Into AI-Generated Art By: Harshita Jain



Harshita is a healthcare consultant based in NYC, and proudly calls New Jersey home. She is also passionate about service, design, social innovation, and the outdoors (she loves running and hiking). Harshita has extensive experience in YJA leadership and is currently serving as a Co-Chair for the 2024-25 Executive Board. Reach out to her with thoughts at harshita.jain@yja.org (This article was previously published in Young Minds – a publication of Young Jains of America (YJA) - on February 16, 2025)



THÉÂTRE D'OPÉRA SPATIAL, JASON M. ALLEN, MIDJOURNEY

By convention, a picture can speak a thousand words. However, a thousand words might have generated this image. Entitled *Théâtre D'opéra Spatial*, this same image was Jason Allen's submission to the Colorado State Fair art competition. It also won first place in the digital art division, leaving Allen with a blue ribbon, \$300 in prize money, and several competitors challenging his entry's validity, let alone its victory: the artwork was entirely AI-generated.



Prompt: A field of sunflowers, with two people running through it, during sunset.

The controversy around the role and place of artificial intelligence within societal boundaries continues as people grapple with novel gray areas related to the ethics of AI in the arts. As the pace of innovation accelerates, so does the need to determine what is — and isn't — ethically acceptable.

“ART” GENERATORS

While ChatGPT is specifically constructed to produce text responses, similar tools excel in generating striking, detailed images from text prompts. Popular platforms include DALL-E, Stable Diffusion, and Midjourney, which fall under the umbrella of AI art generators. Below

The picture of a field of sunflowers of the is an example of NightCafe Creator in action.

Pretty impressive, right? Here is another output NightCafe Creator has generated, with a slightly modified text prompt.



Prompt: A field of sunflowers, with two people running through it, during sunset, in the style of van Gogh.



Another beautiful image, with brushstrokes similar to those seen in van Gogh's works, including *Starry Night*. The sequence of prompts displayed also highlights the tool's ability to facilitate an iterative creative process, enabling the user to fine-tune the output with the addition or alteration of a prompt.

In addition to awe, however, these results have induced several fundamental questions from critics, proponents, and the community at large. Where are these text-to-image AI models pulling baseline images from? Who deserves the credit for their creations? What are the short- and long-term implications for artists and their crafts?

“PIXELATED” AREAS

Several AI image generators market themselves as research labs and deep learning models that can combine images and artistic styles, even alluding to notable artists in cheeky ways (DALL-E is a pun based on Spanish artist Salvador Dali, while Midjourney describes itself as curated by “Fraud Monet,” a play on words in reference to French painter Claude Monet). The ethics behind these models are hotly debated. Gray areas primarily lie within the three following themes: aptitude for theft, ability to misinform, and potential for harm.

Given that AI can mimic the distinctive styles of existing artists, their original pieces must have been folded into this training set, and while sets will try to minimize the inclusion of copyright-protected data, this is easier said than done. Several questions around the ownership of AI-generated images subsequently follow: when existing artists are referenced on an AI art generator, who does the final work belong to? Should the artist used as inspiration receive partial ownership or reimbursement?

Visual and digital art forms also include photographs. In addition to developing paintings and drawings, AI art generators can just as easily create photorealistic images... of just about anything. This can range from the more innocent (the Pope wearing an oversized white puffer jacket, reminiscent of Balenciaga's product line) to the malicious (images of world leaders committing fictitious deeds), but both cases tell a false story and can put the subject's reputations, if not their lives, at stake.

Once these snippets of “fake news” are shared on social media, curbing their dissemination can be a next-to-impossible task. As platforms continue in their struggle to limit misinformation without impeding on basic rights to expression, they must now be able to identify and take down deepfakes, as well.

While certain forms of direct and indirect harm are referenced above, the buck doesn't stop there. Users are

finding edge cases in the capabilities of AI models each day, and regulators and AI company officials are working to define further restrictions and boundaries aimed at minimizing potential damage. For example, models include different safety features, such as banning the use of certain people's names in prompts, producing no output when terms related to violence or self-harm are used, and screening prompts to ensure that content is appropriate irrespective of user age. Oftentimes, issues directly depend on the dataset used when initially training the model, and can be tedious and tricky to address.

NAVIGATING ONGOING INNOVATIONS

The vast usage of AI underscores the numerous opportunities for ethical violations and possible pitfalls of AI art generators, but it remains to be said that the tapped and still untapped power of AI can be harnessed in many beneficial ways.

These examples are but a glimpse into the AI's ever-growing potential. In the meantime, society as a whole must come to an agreement on the right balance between its advantages and disadvantages. So far, most companies have been readily responding to criticism and concerns, expressing that with novel products come unforeseen challenges that they are ready to tackle and address. Nonetheless, public scrutiny around the workings and motivations behind AI models, along with the desire to impose greater control and safety measures around where this technology can go, will only increase as AI innovation booms.

AS FOR JAINISM?

This ethics dilemma was framed in my mind with relation to some of the core principles — specifically the *Mahavrats*, or great vows — of Jainism. Theft ties to *Adattadan*, the vow of non-stealing, and secondarily to *Aparigraha*, the vow of non-possessiveness. Misinformation and harm match up with *Satya* and *Ahimsa*, the vow of truthfulness and non-violence, respectively. Where should we draw the line when it come to using AI while upholding our values? Hopefully, these ideas are an initiation into more meaningful reflection around this topic and similar ones.

In what situations is AI ethical from a Jainism perspective? Did I even write this article, or was it the work of ChatGPT?

Note: For the record, I did indeed write this.

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



Bahubali and Power of Self Control

By: Aarav Savani, Neil Dedhia, Neel Mehta
and Aadi Mehta

(The skit below was written and performed by the Pathshala students (Class 15) of Jain Center of Southern California. In this class the students learn about the Ten Supreme Virtues (Das Lakshana). This skit beautifully illustrates the virtue of Self-Control through Bahubali's journey from a warrior to a monk)

Bharata (*talks to Bahubali, who is meditating*): "Bahubali, you were once a warrior, a king! You had power, wealth, and dominion. Why have you abandoned it all to stand here like a lifeless statue?"

Bahubali (*opening his eyes slowly, voice calm and deep*): "Bharata, the conquest of the world is fleeting, but the conquest of the self is eternal. I fought you in battle, but my true enemy was never you - it was my pride, my anger, my desires."

Bharata (*frustrated*): "Pride? Anger? Desires? I agree that these are the burdens of kingship, Bahubali; but they are also what drives us to lead, to protect our people. You had everything a ruler could wish for! Was it not enough?"

Bahubali (*softly*): "No, Bharata. It was never enough because the desires of the mind are endless. The thirst for power, once quenched, only seeks more. I stood on the battlefield, victorious over you, but at that moment, I saw the true battle was not with you. It was within me."

Flashback: The Duel Between Bahubali and Bharata

Bharata: "You have bested me in every challenge, Bahubali, even in face to face combat. But I am the emperor. I will not accept defeat!"

Bahubali: "Brother, maybe this means I should be the king. Like you always say, the ruler should be stronger than his subjects."

Bharata: "Enough of your riddles! If brute strength will not bring you down, then the Chakra will!"

Bharata: "This Chakra has felled kings, demons, and the mightiest warriors. Now, let it claim you!"

Bahubali: "How dare you! Grr! How could you even think of using such a weapon against your own brother! I am your kin, not your enemy! I shall strike you down for your attempt to slaughter me!"

Bharata: "Oh no!"

Bahubali (*raises his hand*): "Wait! I should not be slaying my kin. Yet, I cannot lower my fist, or I shall be deemed a coward. I seek a different path. I would like to take Diksha!"

Bharata: "Then go, brother. Yes, the kingdom is mine now!"

Back to the Present

Bahubali: "When I raised my fist against you, I felt the surge of triumph, but it was poisoned with arrogance. I saw my reflection in the bloodied blade and asked myself - was *this truly a victory?*"

Bharata: "You had the chance to take the throne, to rule wisely! Instead, you turned away."



Bahubali: “Because ruling is not the highest form of power. Power over oneself is greater. I could have ruled with justice, yes, but even justice is tainted when the soul is bound by pride and attachment. What good is a wise ruler if he is still a slave to his own mind?”

Bharata (*pauses, reflecting*): “But the people needed you. Our kingdom needed you. Was it not your duty to serve them?”

Bahubali: “Service does not only come through ruling, Bharata. True service is in guiding others to liberation, in showing that wealth and power are illusions that cloud the soul. Our attachments bind us, making us believe they define who we are. But the truth is, we are beyond our titles, beyond our wealth, beyond even our bodies.”

Bharata (*lowering his voice*): “And have you truly found peace in this silence? In this stillness?”

Bahubali: “More than I ever did on the throne. The silence speaks to me, Bharata. It strips away the noise of the world, the endless desires, the need for recognition. In renunciation, I have found what no kingdom could ever give me.”

Bharata (*sighs deeply*): “I do not know if I have the strength to walk the path you have chosen.”

Bahubali: “It is not an easy path, but it is the only one that leads to true freedom. Jain dharma teaches that anger, greed, and attachment bind the soul in suffering. Only through self-control can one attain liberation.”

Bharata (*after a long pause*): “And what about me, brother? What should I do?”

Bahubali (placing a gentle hand on Bharata’s shoulder): “Live with awareness. Rule with detachment. Let not the throne rule you. Be just, but do not seek validation from power. Serve, but do not be bound by ambition. That is the way of true kingship.”

Bharata (bows): “I have always thought of victory as conquest over others. But today, you have shown me that the greatest battle is within. I bow to your wisdom, Bahubali.”

Bahubali (smiling faintly): “Then you, too, have won your battle.”

Narrated Summary:

Aadi:

This skit beautifully illustrates the virtue of self-control through Bahubali’s journey from a warrior to a monk. His self-restraint is evident when he defeats his brother Bharata in battle but chooses not to strike the final blow, realizing that true victory lies in overcoming ego rather than conquering others. Instead of ruling with power, he embraces diksha, demonstrating detachment from wealth and authority.

Aarav:

Bahubali’s deep meditation, where he stands motionless entwined with vines, symbolizes extreme discipline over bodily needs and desires, reflecting Jain ideals. By rejecting anger, pride, and attachment, Bahubali embodies the Jain teaching that self-mastery leads to ultimate liberation, showing that true leadership is not control over others but control over oneself.



Conversation with Diksharthis Sunitaben and Rishi Zaveri Interview by Sanjay Bhandari

The Jain Society of Greater Detroit (JSGD) is honored as its two members, a mother Sunitaben Shah, and her son Rishi Zaveri, take the noble path of Diksha. Having immigrated to the USA in 1997, they have been part of JSGD ever since. In February-March 2025, they decided to take Diksha. The ceremony will be held from June 6 to 8 2025, at Manas Mandir Tirth in Shahpur, Maharashtra. This has been an inspiring, emotional journey for the society, their family, and friends. Their Bahuman Ceremony was held in many Sanghs in several countries. Notably, JSGD holds a record in North America, as four other members also have taken Diksha in the past. To find out more about the journey of Sunitaben and Rishi, Sanjay Bhandari, a member of JSGD and an editor of the Young Generation section of Jain Digest, had an insightful conversation with them. Here is an excerpt of their dialog.

1) When and how did you decide to take Diksha?

Rishi: About 1.5 years ago, I firmly decided on Diksha, though for 5-6 years, I was on the fence. I wasn't sure of my direction, but as I gained clarity about my life's purpose, the path became evident. My Guru never insisted - he inspired. His role was that of a guiding light, urging me to be resolute if I chose this path.

Sunitaben: My journey began 18-20 years ago as I immersed myself in religious learning and life experiences. The thought of Diksha emerged gradually. It is about making the highest use of one's life. Once I embraced the idea, my conviction was unwavering, without a shadow of doubt.



2) Who was your biggest motivator/supporter?

Rishi: My Guru and my mother, who nurtured this thought for a long time, and her deep-rooted belief in

Diksha inspired me. Her joy for my Diksha surpasses even her happiness if I was to get married.

Sunitaben: My *Kalyan Mitra* and family. I had decided to take Diksha even before meeting my Guru.

3) How did family and friends react?

Rishi: Most of my family was overjoyed. Some close relatives were emotional as it was a big step. Most of my friends, being non-Jains, were curious rather than surprised. They had witnessed my journey, and after I explained my decision, they were so moved that they decided to join my Diksha ceremony on June 8. My father ensured I had done thorough introspection before committing to this path. My brother is definitely the most affected, but he is also coming around to accepting it. I am also trying to spend some time with him and also help him understand this decision.

Sunitaben: Everyone was happy and excited. Some had questions, which I clarified. A few friends were initially shocked and wanted to stay close to understand if I was making the right choice. My younger son, who may soon get married, might take time to fully grasp my decision, but I believe he will, in time.

4) What will you miss the most? Will you be able to meet loved ones?

Rishi: I have devoted years to *Shasan Seva* across North America and beyond. While I know I will be cut off from most of the world, I embrace this with full awareness. I may miss people, not with sorrow, but out of gratitude for their role in bringing me where I am. I have accepted that I will never leave India again.

Sunitaben: There is no sense of loss. I am at peace with my decision. Meetings will happen if fate allows, even with Rishi, but I will not make any effort to seek them. I am retired, and I have no worldly attachments holding me back.



5) What Preparations were needed?

Rishi: The true qualification is deep *vairagya* (detachment) and a resolute will to walk Prabhu's path. Study, Guru's guidance, and *Vihar* strengthen this resolve. There is no formal test - Guru constantly observes your detachment. Even at home, he subtly assesses whether any attachment lingers.

Sunitaben: It's like training for a marathon - willingness, surrender, and determination are key. My Guru's Guru is **Shri Daksh Rekha Shriji Maharaj**. My Guru, **Shri HeetAatmaRekha Maharaj**, took Diksha seven years ago. Both my Guru and her Guru accepted me in just 25 days - a rare occurrence - because they saw my journey and unwavering determination.

6) What Challenges did you face and What kept you going?

Rishi: My biggest concern was health, as India's climate and way of life are different. Could I live without the comforts I was used to? A severe fever of 103°F in Hyderabad tested me, but *Samata* (equanimity) kept me firm. My Guru saw that I could endure anything.

Sunitaben: My 20-year journey was gradual. With determination and surrender, no challenge felt like a challenge.

7) What will be your Daily Activities after Diksha?

Rishi: My greatest joy will be serving my Guru. My focus will be learning, seva, and spiritual study under **Panyas Pravar – ViragRatna Vijayji Maharaj**, who has inspired me since 2013.

Sunitaben: *Swadhyay* (scriptural study), *seva*, and training as guided by my Guru. The first five years are of silent learning - no external interactions, just reading, writing, and introspection.

8) What Challenges do you foresee?

Rishi: Physical hardships are easy to overcome. The true challenge for a *Sadhu* is defeating ego. Changing clothes or name doesn't bring humility - it must come from within. Shedding *Ahankar* (ego) is the ultimate test, not just for *Sadhus*, but for everyone.

Sunitaben: No challenges - just unwavering surrender. My training will reveal more, and I will embrace it all with acceptance.

9) What Achievements do you Seek?

Rishi & Sunitaben: The only true achievement is the cultivation of virtues. Life's purpose is to attain higher virtues - humility, *Maitri* (universal friendship), and *Samata* (equanimity). A Guru alone can judge one's spiritual progress.

10) Any advice to those considering Diksha?

Rishi: Find a Guru with whom you share an honest, soul-level connection. His character should be pristine, and you should feel a heart-to-heart bond. Experience *Updhan* (austerity training) to understand life after Diksha.

Sunitaben: Take one step at a time. Learn, prepare, and surrender gradually.

Guidance for Youngsters

1) Material success vs. Spirituality

Rishi: Spirituality and success are not separate. True spirituality enhances material success by keeping one on the right path. Without it, even wealth may lead to inner emptiness.

2) Advice for Hesitant Youth

Rishi: Experiment with sacrifice. Not all are meant for Diksha, but a true Guru will guide you to your *dharma*.

3) Dealing with Stress, Peer Pressure, and Modern Challenges

Rishi: Perspective is key—spiritual wisdom transforms how we perceive struggles and peer pressure.

4) Jainism & Technology

Rishi: Jainism is not against technology. It is about rightful use. *Upkaran* (constructive use) nurtures virtues; *Adhikaran* (misuse) leads to downfall. AI and technology, if used wisely, can aid spiritual growth.

We are thankful to Rishi and Sunitaben for taking the time to talk with Sanjay. We feel that the Jain community will be inspired and motivated by reading about their journey. Hearty Congratulation and Khub Khub Anumodana to both Diksharthis on behalf of JAINA and the Jain Digest Committee.



Inspirational Quotes

Grateful and awake, ask what you need to know now. Say what you feel now. Love what you love now.

— Mark Nepo

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the greatest intention.

— Kahlil Gibran

You are a cosmic flower. Om chanting is the process of opening the psychic petals of that flower.

— Amit Ray

The deeper we move into our own hearts, the more the world makes sense.

— Mark Nepo

Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality.

— Viktor E. Frankl

To be calm is the greatest asset in the world. It's the greatest siddhi, the greatest power you can have. If you can only learn to be calm you will solve every problem. This is something you must remember. When you are perfectly calm, time stops. There is no time, karma stops, samskaras stop. Everything becomes null and void. For when you are calm you are one with the entire energy of the universe and everything will go well with you.

— Ramana Maharshi to Robert Adams

When you stop inventing reality then you see things as they really are

— Ben Okri

The present moment is filled with joy & happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

Be Kind whenever possible. It is always possible

— Dalai Lama

You cannot believe in God until you believe in yourself

— Swami Vivekananda

When I understand myself, I understand you, and out that understanding comes love.

- Jiddu Krishnamurti

A bird is safe in its nest – but that is not what its wings are made for.

- Amit Ray



A Tribute: 40 Years of Jain Digest



In lands afar, across the seas,
A dream took root in '81's breeze.
JAINA was born — a noble aim,
To unite all Jains beneath one name.

No sect, no tongue, no place too far,
A federation like a guiding star.
Associations, hand in hand,
Together stood across this land.

Then came a voice in '85,
A spark that brought our words alive.
On pages bound by hope and grace,
Jain Digest found its rightful place.

Not just a name, but something more,
A mirror to our culture's core.
A blend of thoughts, traditions deep,
Awake in hearts it came to keep.

We bow to one who lit the flame,
Dr. Bhuvanendra Kumar — a cherished name.
Against all odds, with steady hand,
He helped this vision proudly stand.

Each issue brought with thoughtful care,
Ideas and voices rich and rare.
Through forty years it's never ceased,
A silent bond that's only increased

No fee it sought, no prize it claimed,
Just service pure, its only aim.
With editors, writers, readers too,
Its circle grew, its spirit flew.

So here's to *Jain Digest*, bright and strong,
A legacy that's lived so long.
And as we mark this special year,
We raise our hearts with love and cheer.

May ten more pass with golden light,
And future dreams take soaring flight.
With folded hands, we bless this quest,
A journal truly of the best.

- Dr. Sulekh C. Jain