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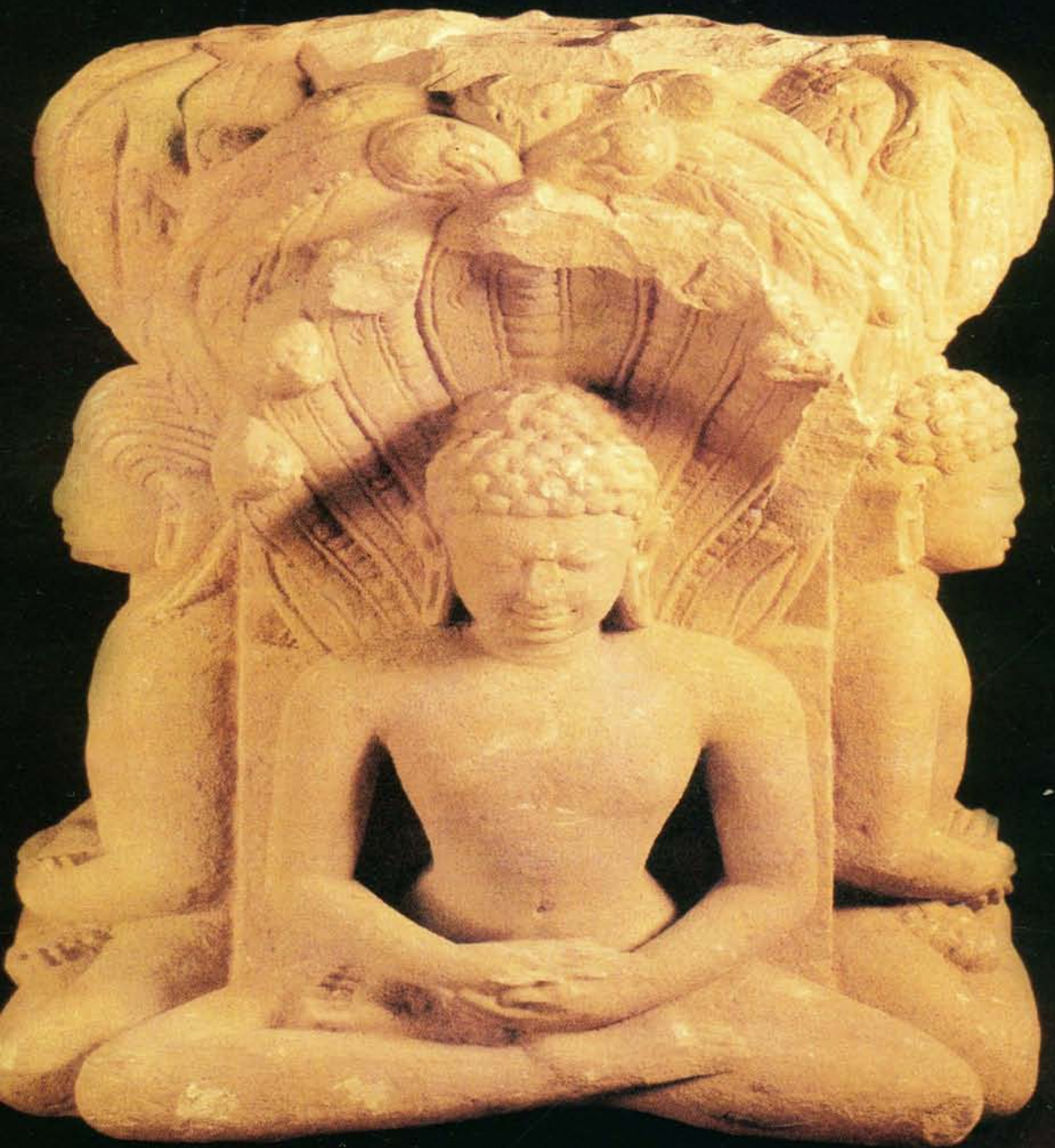
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VARDHAMAN

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Front Cover: Oil painting on canvas - 5 ft x 5 ft.

The entire philosophy of Jainism is based on ahimsa - non violence towards all living beings. Even the minuscule living form has to be treated with tremendous compassionate universal eternal love.

The bright 24 petalled lotus is symbolic of the 24 liberated souls - the 24 Tirthankaras. The lotus itself is an iconic representation of purity, divinity and divine grace. The central graphic figure is the cosmic man (*loka purusha*). Here the cosmological scheme is super imposed on the human body in an attempt to synergise the microcosm with the macrocosm.

The human body is divided into three - the lower world (*adholoka*), the middle world (*madhyaloka*) and the upper world (*urdhvaloka*). The swastika is the first auspicious symbol from the *ashta mangala*.

The blessing hand has a pure gold *bindu* expressing the purity of the soul (*jiva*).

The *panchamahabhuta* or the five primordial elements of nature, include the radiant red fire (*agni*), the tranquil blue water (*jal*), the nurturing green earth (*bhumi*), the vast bright white cosmos (*akash*) and the golden breath of life air (*vayu*) These *panchamahabhuta* have been divine witnesses enveloping the message of Jainism, helping mankind to reach the final stage - *moksha* - liberation.



Back Cover: Oil painting on canvas - 5 ft x 5 ft

Shri Vatsa is an auspicious mark seen on the upper chest of all the 24 Tirthankaras, symbolising compassionate universal love for all living beings. The four-petalled blooming lotus also represents the four dimensions of *purushartha* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*) which these liberated souls have transcended.

The radiant sun is symbolic of the brilliance of Jain philosophy which has 16 emotions as its fundamentals - *sol bhavana* depicted in the form of 16 rays of light.

The pure gold *bindu* is the core of the sun, a reminder to mankind of his final goal – *moksha* – liberation.

Both the front and back covers have been specially painted for The Times of India, to mark the 2600 th birth celebration of Bhagwan Mahavir. Both the covers as well as all the paintings in this book are the creation of Saadhak Shivaanand Saraswati (Udayraj A. Gadnis). The paintings are an artistic representation based on extensive research undertaken by him over the past three years.



FOREWORD

Feelings of wonder and hope surge within me, as I perceive the many auspicious signs that have appeared at the start of the new millennium. I recall, for instance, the United Nations Peace Summit held at the UN headquarters in New York last September when participants professing diverse faiths met to reaffirm the values they cherish in common - peace and justice and happiness for all - thereby proving that humankind is determined to reclaim its spiritual heritage from the debris of violence and intolerance.

What inspired me hugely at this Millennium Summit was the presence of a large contingent of Jain participants, belonging to all sects. The calmness of their speech and conduct, simple lifestyles, and steadfast dedication to Jain teachings, influenced me to put together in book form the powerful insights that Bhagwan Mahavir and the 24 Tirthankaras have left behind for the lasting benefit of humankind.

Such an undertaking could not have come my way at a more propitious moment for me. The birthday of my late husband, Ashok Jain, just precedes the 2600 birth anniversary of Lord Mahavir. Such a fine coincidence gives me all the more reason to present this book on behalf of the Times Group, which I now have the honour to head.

The attributes of Jain philosophy can be compared to a lotus in bloom. The fragrance of the lotus is evenly spread. It does not waft in any one direction. The teachings of Jainism also reach out to one and all. They do not acknowledge barriers of race or creed, of nation or dogma. This is why their compassion is not confined to the adherents of the faith.

Jain philosophy seeks to be relevant to humankind as a whole and indeed to all living creatures. It takes in its stride the past, the present and the future. It endeavours to establish its pertinence in every circumstance where a human being is required to strike a spiritual balance with another human being, or with the environment, or, above all, within the soul.

It is a matter of incalculable satisfaction to me that this pertinence of Jain teachings is exemplified in the example set by non-Jain Living Masters, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Pujya Asaram Bapu, Swami Sukhbodanand and many other spiritual leaders, as they strive, serenely and steadfastly, for the welfare of humankind. They rise above the barriers of creed, caste and race to inculcate a transparent, compassionate and creative art of living.

I would also like to express my deep affections to my grandson Vardhman. True to his name, he enriched my vision while he was here with us and continues to do so from the great beyond.

Finally, I offer my salutations to the Supreme Teacher, to the Living Masters, who hover above every seeker like a luminous cloud which emanates calm radiance and showers its blessings with abundance. May they continue to guide humankind's actions and crown its endeavours with success.

Sushma Jain

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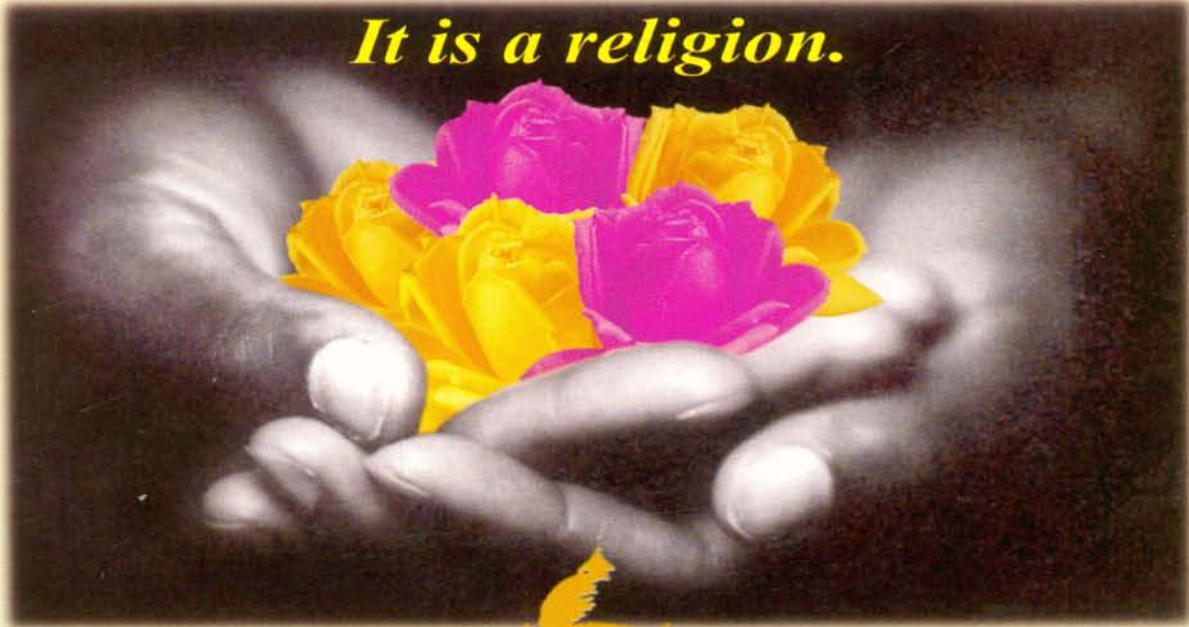
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JAINISM, A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



All sounds recoil thence, where speculation has no room,
nor does the mind penetrate there.
The liberated is not long or short; big or small; he is not black nor white...
he is without body, without contact of matter, he is not masculine nor
feminine or neuter; he perceives, he knows but there is no analogy;
its essence is without form; there is no
condition of the unconditioned

BHAGWAN MAHAVIR

SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION:
SAVDAH SHIVANAND SARASWATI

Jainism believes that an immortal and eternal soul (*jiva*) resides within all living beings. But the soul being vulnerable to the effects of deeds (karma) cause the soul to suffer by being subjected to repeated rebirths. Such suffering is believed to cease only when the chain of rebirth is broken to attain liberation - *moksha*.

Jainism has been founded by Vardhaman Mahavir who was called Jina, who lived c. 540-468 BC. The word Jain originates from Jina, meaning victory, conqueror or liberator.

The Jains have a chronology of their own which begins in the year 522 BC, which, according to their reckoning, was the date of Mahavir's death, aged 72. He was a prince in Bihar who, at the age of 30 was dissatisfied with life and after 12 years of severe asceticism, he attained enlightenment. He was preceded in history by a series of 23 Tirthankaras or trailblazers; the last one of these, Parshvanath, may have lived in the late eighth century BC.

The early Jains spread from Bihar, especially to Gujarat and South India. There was a clear distinction between the two main sects - the Shvetambaras (white clad) who permitted themselves a white loincloth as their sole possession, and the Digambaras (sky clad) who walked about stark naked being without any possessions, since they had vanquished all desires.

The Jain holy scripture is laid down in 12 books, called *Angas*, written in Prakrit. The Digambaras now fewer in number, maintain that the *Angas* were never composed by Mahavir, and instead follow books written by later religious Jain leaders. This is the so-called Secondary Canon, which in turn is followed by extensive theological literature. Through this, Jains are asked to practice the virtues of poverty, humility, purity, truthfulness, self-discipline, suffering, tolerance, innocence, abstention and asceticism. By conquering all his desires a person may breakout of the *sansara* or chain of rebirths and so end all suffering.

The cosmology of Jainism teaches that the world is eternal and space immense, though limited, and empty. In the centre of the disc-shaped earth, are the strata of kingdoms ruled by demons where the doomed suffer long but not eternal punishment. Above the earth, rise layers of skies and, higher still, lovely heavens where different classes of Gods enjoy power and pleasure.

The Gods are great and may grant boons to mortals, but they too are not immortal, being subject to karma and the chains of reincarnation. Higher even than the abode of the Gods, beyond a disc which acts like a lid closing off the mortal realms, there lies the realm of those who have gained enlightenment and are therefore exempt from rebirth. The regions beneath and above the earth remain unchanged, but on earth ascending and descending epochs of history cause its people to grow taller and better, or smaller and meaner. At present we live in an era where people are becoming progressively more wicked and immoral. This deterioration will last for another several thousand years before there is an improvement in the moral standards on earth.

All the individual souls together form the spiritual substance of the universe. In essence, they are knowing and wise, but their wisdom is clouded by their own desire, which in turn is caused

by their bodies, which have been infected with physical pollution and ignorance. This condition causes the souls to travel from one mortal body to the next, like a person caught in a strong current and unable to free himself. The karmic activity of a soul causes vibrations that attract particles of matter towards it. Only through complete control of all its desires can the soul attain peace, stillness, lucidity and insight into its condition. Only when that is achieved, can the enlightened ascetic end his life by ceasing to take food. When he dies, his liberated soul will rise to the summit of the world where it will live forever.

Jains deny the existence of a creator. The world has always existed and is subject to the eternal laws of karma, the causality of recompense and punishment. The Jains do not worship the Gods but they venerate the Tirthankaras, the early saints and precursors of Mahavir, who first broke out of the *sansara*, the chain of existences. Many legends circulate about the Tirthankaras and their colossal statues are venerated by all. Only the sect of the Sthanakavasis rejects all temple cults and concentrates only on studying the scriptures.

Jainism is characterised by vegetarianism and complete ahimsa, i.e. that its members take care not to harm any fellow creatures, to the extent that some Jains even walk with brooms to sweep away the insects from their path lest they tread on them. There are less than four million Jains in India and in a few Western countries. The final goal of a Jain is to sever the chain of rebirth and achieve a state of liberation known variously as *kaivalya*, *moksha* or *nirvana*.



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The timeless caves of tranquility...

The Hathigumpha inscription of the Great Kalinga Emperor, Kharvela of 1st century B.C., at Udaygiri, stands witness to the pre-Mauryan antiquity of Jainism in Orissa. Parsvanath preached at Khandagiri, says the Jain tradition.

The twin hills of Udaygiri and Khandagiri on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar are honey combed with caves which once served as retreats of Jain Ascetics. These marvelous network of tunnels and cells are hewn out of coarse grained sandstone. Set in the tranquility of the secluded hills, the 18 caves of Udaygiri and 15 at Khandagiri, locally known as Gumphas, are magnificent specimens of rock-cut architecture. Some of them have lavishly sculptured friezes with pilasters, verandas and arches.

The largest and the most beautiful of the caves is the double storeyed Rani Gumpha carved with human figures, animals, flowers, arches and other motifs. Its pristine grandeur is evident even today. On the crest of Khandagiri is situated a modern Jain temple.

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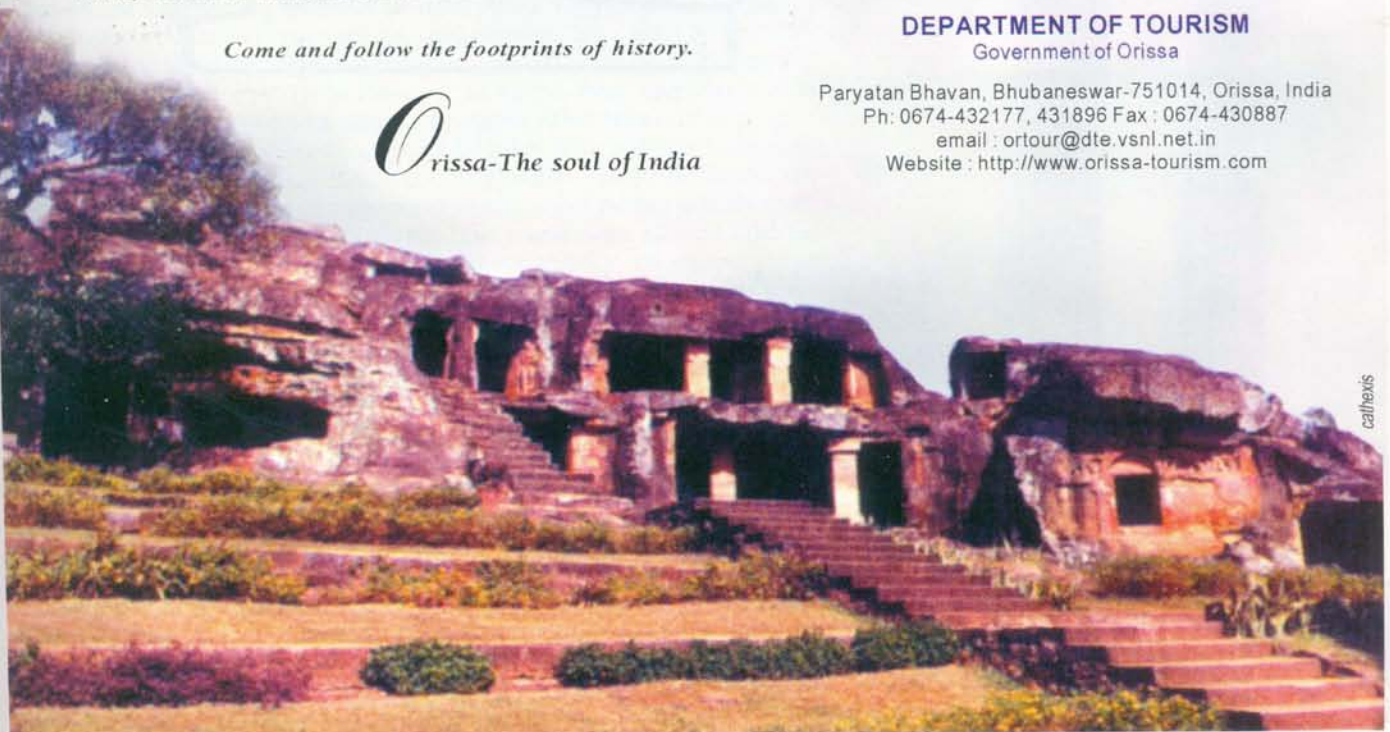
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Mahavir

The 24th Tirthankara



Non injury to living beings. Which must be observed very scrupulously and thoroughly and behaving towards all living beings with proper restraint and control

The very first principle of faith laid down by Bhagwan Mahavir is ahimsa

SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION:
SAADHAK SHIVAANAND SARASWATI
ILLUSTRATION: PRASHANT SHAH

Mahavir, the 'great man' lived peacefully in heaven for centuries until he decided to incarnate on earth in order to save humanity. He took the form of an embryo in the womb of Devananda, wife of the Brahmin Rishabhadatta, who lived at Kundapura. That night, when Devananda lay half asleep in her bed, she dreamt of 14 favourable omens - an elephant, a bull, a lion, the Goddess Laxmi, a garland, the moon, the sun, a banner, a beautiful jug, a lake full of lotuses, the ocean, God's palace, jewellery and an eternal flame. She told her husband what she had seen. Rishabhadatta was overjoyed, for he realised that a son would be born to them who would become a great scholar and a famous religious leader.

Then Sakra, the king of the Gods in heaven, decided that Mahavir should be the son of a Kshatriya, so he instructed the Gods' messenger Haringamesi, to transpose the new embryo from Devananda's womb to that of Trishala, wife of the Kshatriya king, Siddhartha. Trishala, who was reclining on a luxurious bed in a palace full of flowers and vases of perfumes now saw the 14 good omens in her dream. Her husband, Siddhartha, began to enjoy good fortune ever since that moment. He became ever richer in gold and silver, in land and grain, while his loyal army won victories and fame. The night when Mahavir was to be born, the Gods descended from heaven to share in the rejoicing. Flowers and fruits, gold and silver, rained from heaven on Siddhartha's palace. When Mahavir was born, he received the earthly name of Vardhaman (he who grows and develops). This event took place 2,590 years ago, according to Jain history.

For 30 years, Vardhaman led a worldly life as a prince in Bihar, he married Yasoda and had a daughter called Riyadarshana. His parents, who were adherents of the doctrine of Parshvanath, lay down one day and abstained from food until they left the world. Deeply impressed, Vardhaman, decided that he would become an ascetic. He distributed his wealth among the poor and began his life of wandering without bonds. After 12 years he acquired *moksha*, liberation from all earthly desires and with it, enlightenment. Again the Gods assembled on earth around his person to exclaim, 'Victory!' Thus Mahavir became Jina, the victor (his followers call themselves Jainas or Jains after him). At that moment the sky was bluer than ever before, like a deep lake covered with blue lotuses, while heavenly music could be heard on earth. Mahavir, seated in profound meditation under a teak tree, became omniscient (*kevalin*). He had overcome all evil and he now began to preach what he had practised for 12 years.

One day while Mahavir was meditating in a field, a farmer arrived with his cows which he left in the field, telling Mahavir to guard them. Mahavir, however, was in such deep meditation that he did not hear the farmer nor see the cows. When the farmer came back the cows were nowhere to be seen. Furious the farmer screamed, "You lazy useless idler!" to the noble saint, and started beating him.

He would have killed him, if Indra had not descended from heaven to protect the great ascetic whom he had been watching over all the time knowing what would happen.

Thirty years after becoming *kevalin*, he was ready to leave the world, so he became liberated (*mukta*) and perfected (*siddha*). Mahavir had himself carried to a throne made of diamonds in a large hall illuminated by heavenly light. He preached there until, in the small hours of the night, all his listeners had gone to sleep. Unseen, he attained *moksha*. Quickly many lamps were lit but the soul had departed.



ASHTA MANGALA



The eight auspicious sacred symbols hold deep spiritual significance for devout Jains.

According to spiritual command, every Jain has to draw these symbols with pure unbroken rice grains in front of the icon of the Tirthankara before commencing his obeisance to the temple. While sitting in the sanctorum after worshipping the Bhagawan in a Jain Temple, these symbols attract positive energies.



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Swad, khushboo, Rang... Uttamta ke Sang !

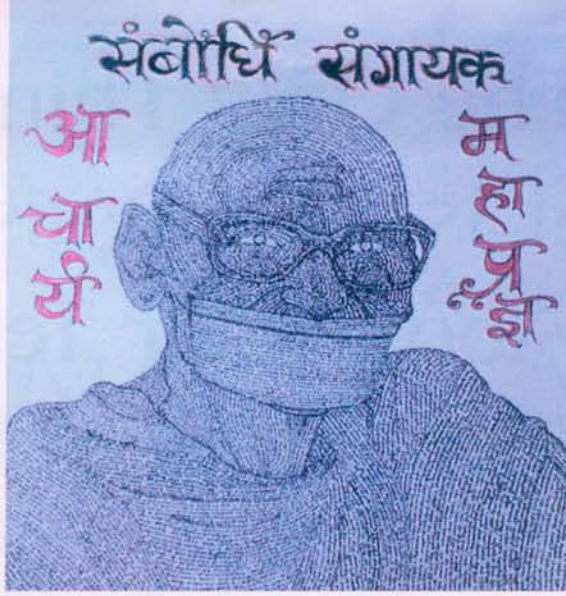
Manikchand

MA ADVT. BRD.

Acharya Mahapragya, the 80-year-old spiritual head of the Terapanth sect of Jains around the world, welcomed me into his humble abode; a simple little classroom of a primary school in a remote little Rajasthani village. He and his following of *munis* and *sadhvis* had reached the settlement after walking 12 km. that morning and would be setting out for the village down the road early next day. I had

driven over 50 km. of dusty roads from Ladnun, the physical headquarters of the sect, expecting to be awed by the holy man. Instead I found one who accepted his karma with unassuming grace.

Acharya Mahapragya took up the mantle as leader of the Terapanth sect of Jains on the death of his guru Acharya Tulsi in 1998. Born in 1921 in Tamkar, a small village in Rajasthan, Acharya Mahapragya became a monk at the age of 10. At the age of 59, he was appointed the successor-designate of the order by his mentor and guru Acharya Tulsi.



Portrait of Acharya Tulsi in calligraphy

The Acharya has written over 150 books on various subjects including philosophy, literature, yoga and religion in Hindi and Sanskrit.

The Acharya is also a great *sadhaka* or practitioner of meditation and the rediscovery of the lost links of the Jain way of meditation - *Preksha Dhyana* - are credited to him.

Karma took on a whole new meaning that day as I sat at the feet of the Acharya. He shared with me insights into the work he

and his order were engaged in over the years: reinterpreting the holy scriptures in light of modern realities. "They are not very different apart from the words used to describe things," he said. "For instance, our scriptures talk of karma that predetermines your life. Science, calls it genes. Though faith and reason may appear to be poles apart, they are not contradictions as they share a common source."

He told me about the task of re-examining the scriptures in light of modern findings, which was what he and his followers were busy doing. I

Acharya Mahapragya

A Beacon of Peace

Having written over 150 books in various subjects, he is credited with rediscovering the lost links of *Preksha Dhyana*

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS: GUSTASP IRANI

asked him his views on the nuclear bomb that India had recently acquired. How did he, who covered his mouth when he spoke so as not to harm the bacteria in the air, feel about a weapon of such enormous destructive power?

"The bomb," he assured me, "was not the problem but a symptom of people losing sight of basic moral values. What is at stake here is that each individual has to resolve the conflict within himself. Once everyone in a family, society, nation and the worldwide community of mankind accepts the principal of non-violence and respect for all living things, the issue of making and possessing weapons of destruction is automatically resolved."

I emerged from my audience with the Acharya awed by both the depth of his vision as also by its clarity and simplicity: qualities that are manifest in the lifestyle of his order. As we drove to the next village in which the head *sadhvi* has taken up temporary residence, we passed two *sadhvis* setting out with their bowls to accept whatever people offered them for their evening meal.

The head *sadhvi* was surrounded by women who had come to seek her blessings and like the Acharya she showered her grace on them with a total lack of self-indulgence. In the little time she could spare for me before attending to matters concerning her flock, she explained the need for them to keep travelling from one place to another.

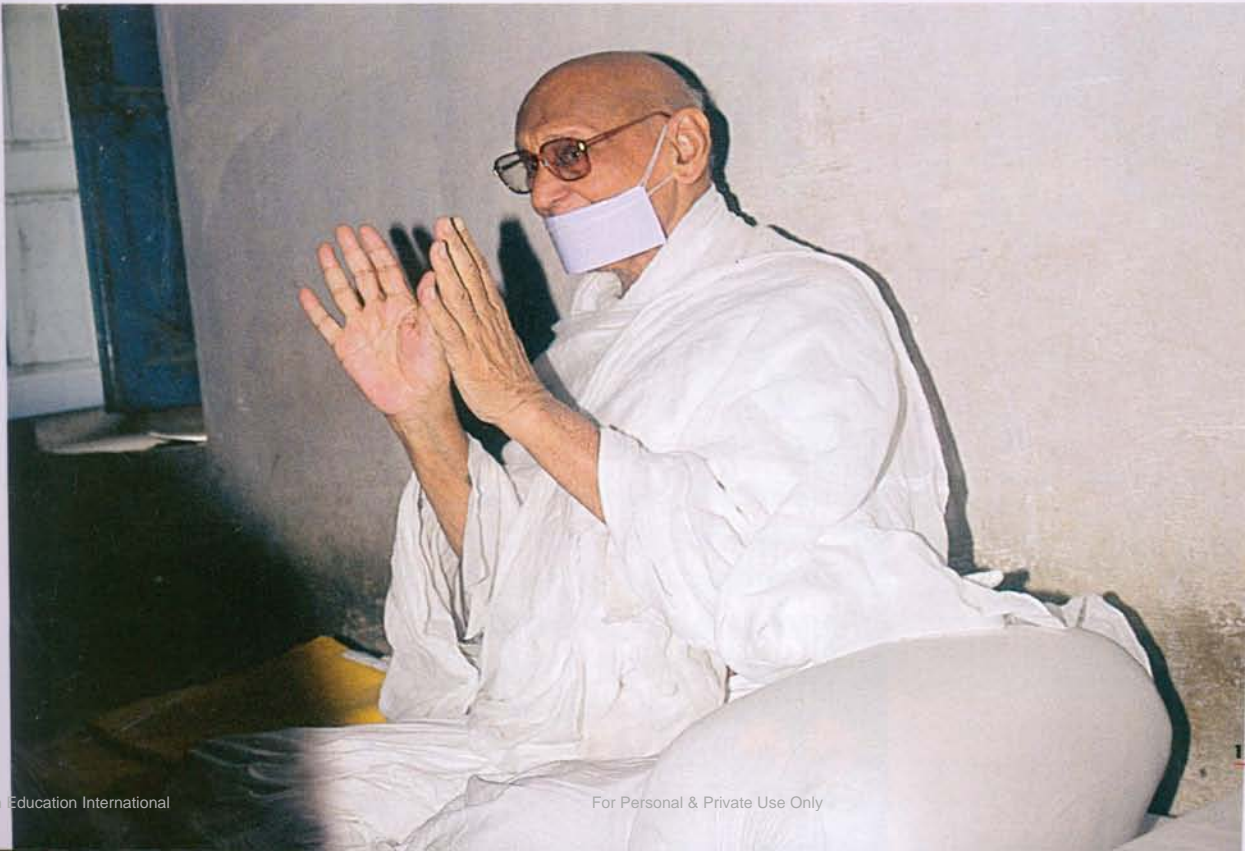


It had nothing to do with penance. They were constantly on the move so that they did not get attached to any given place: an extension of their renouncement of materialism. The longest they could stay at one place was four months during the monsoons and after that no more than one month at any given place.

And talking to her, I recalled the elderly *sadhvi* I had met at Siva Kendra, a home for old *sadhvis*, back in Ladnun. Almost 82, she was stooped over and had to walk with the aid of a walking stick. But the memories of her wanderings were still fresh in her mind and she showed me a map of India in which she has marked out all the places that her Acharya, with her in tow, had visited on foot. Little dots stretched across the length and breadth of the country and then there were all those unmarked villages through which they had passed. There was no place they could call home, but the entire country was their backyard.

By the time I started my journey back to civilisation, the sun has slipped low in the sky. Wild peacocks graced the rooftops of homes in the little hamlet where the Acharya had settled in for the night. Looking at the peacock's silhouette against an orange sky, I realised that the village, like everything, including me, that had been touched by this gracious man, was blessed.

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Acharya Shiv Muni

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WITH HIS LEGION OF FOLLOWERS





KNOWLEDGE

Punjab has given birth to great saints and seers including Guru Nank and Guru Gobind Singh. Great spiritual leaders of Jainism like Acharya Samrat Amar Singhji, Acharya Samrat Sohanlalji, Acharya Samrat Kashiramji and Acharya Samrat Atmaramji, have originated from Punjab. This pious land is the birthplace of another great upholder of Jainism - Acharya Shiv Muni, who has established and introduced new religious and spiritual norms.

Born in Malaut Mandi of Fairdkot district in Punjab on September 18, 1942 and named Shiv Kumar by his parents Chiranji Lal and Vidya Devi, he rose to reach the highest spiritual pinnacle. He started treading on the path of renunciation and penance as taught by Bhagwan Mahavir when he was 30, in May 1972.

By then he had completed his post-graduation in English and Philosophy and after receiving *diksha*, he was awarded a Ph.D. for his research work on 'Doctrine of Liberation in Indian Religions with special reference to Jainism'. He was the first to receive this honour among the Sthanak Sadhu Samaj and perhaps the only *sadhu* to have completed his Ph.D. in English.

Acharya Shiv Muni is widely travelled and has visited Geneva, Toronto, Kuwait, America, etc. to spread the tenets of Jainism.

After he was conferred the status of Yuvacharya at a grand Sadhu Sammelan in Pune by Acharya Samrat Shri Anand Rishiji, he engaged himself in meditation, self-study and pen-

ance for more than 14 years. He has proved to be a tower of knowledge for his followers.

According to Acharya Shiv Muni, "One who is awakened is a *muni* and one who is sleeping is an *amuni*. It is the consciousness which raises oneself to the status of *muni*. The one who has achieved an egoless state is a *muni*."

He has made intensive studies of the ancient religious and spiritual scriptures. It was only after years of in-depth research that he came out with his book on meditation, *Dhyana: A Divya Sadhana* which earned him a D.Litt.

"*Dhyana sadhana* teaches us the true art of living in the present moment," says Acharya Shiv Muni. "The one who understands and appreciates the present moment is awakened and conscious. He creates his own future. What has already passed has slipped through his hands but the present is in his hands. The one who understands this moment is an enlightened person."

As rituals gained more importance, *dhyana* and *sadhana* did not receive the attention they deserved. After Acharya Shiv Muni achieved self-

realisation, in order to spread this knowledge, he took the initiative to organise meditation camps and personally taught meditation to the participants.

It is said that one who can follow and persuade others to follow *panchachar* is a true Acharya. With his formidable qualities of uniting and organising, Acharya Shiv Muni is a true Acharya.

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Acharya Vidyanand hails from the ancient Indian *muni* tradition. The Egyptian historians referred to Jain *munis*, as *zenmosopist*. Alexander the Great, on his return from India took with him one such great *zenmosopist* called Kalyan who later became known as Colonus in Egypt. Even after more than 2300 years, his *samadhi* can be seen today in Egypt.

Acharya Vidyanand Muniraj was accepted as the undisputed leader of Jains in 1994 on the occasion of the 2500th Nirvan Mahotsava of Bhagwan Mahavir by Acharya Tulsi.

Acharya Vidyanand was born in Shedwal (in Belgaum, Karnataka) on April 22, 1925, in a Upadhyaya family. His father Pandit Kalappa Upadhyaya was a graduate from Syadvad Mahavidyalaya. His mother's name was Saraswati and her son later proved himself to be a true son of Saraswati, the

Acharya Vidyanand FORGING A NEW IDENTITY

A serious student of religion, philosophy and ancient history, and a revered leader amongst Jains, he has now embarked upon the task of encouraging the use of Prakrit

goddess of knowledge, when he became a serious student of religion, philosophy and ancient history.

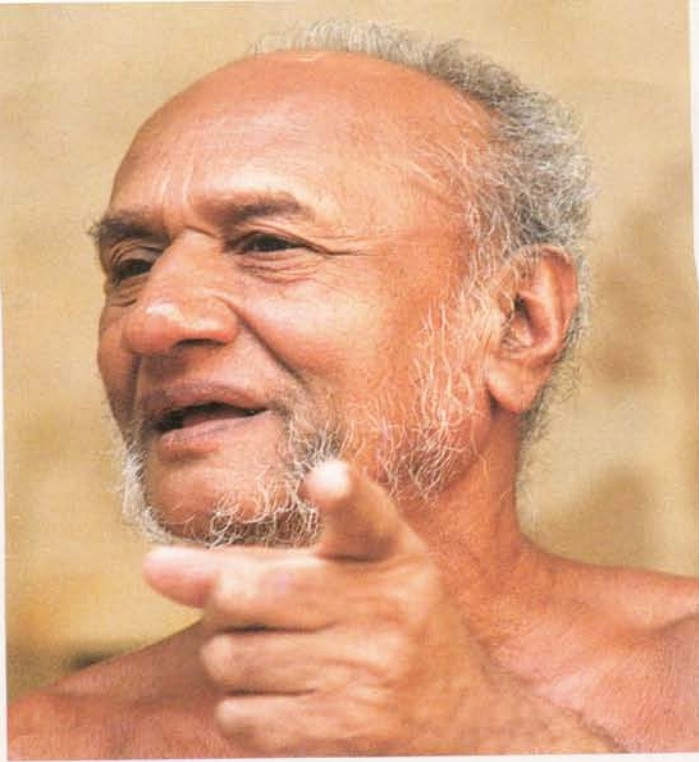
He received his early education in Acharya Shantisagar Digambar Jain Gurukul in Shedwal.. In 1946 he received *kshullak diksha* in Tamagaddi village of Karnataka from Acharya Mahavirkirtiji and was given the name Parshwakirti by his teacher. In 1963, he was given *muni diksha* and was conferred the *munipad* in Delhi by Acharya Deshbhushanji and was given the name Vidyanand. In 1974, he was awarded Upadhyayapad by his teacher. In 1978, he became an Elacharya and received the Acharyapad on June 28 1987.

Acharya Vidyanand's religious and spiritual accomplishments have been multi-dimensional. He has propagated the teachings of Jainism on the occasion 200th Parinirvan Mahotsava of Bhagwan Mahavir. He was responsible for bringing the Jain community under one flag through *samansuttam* which gave a new identity to Jainism.

To mark thousand years of the world famous statue of Bhagwan Bahubali, he organised *mangal kalash* processions. Organising a *gommadgiri* function in Indore and *bawangajaji* in Badwani, speak highly of the creative imagination of Acharya Vidyanand.

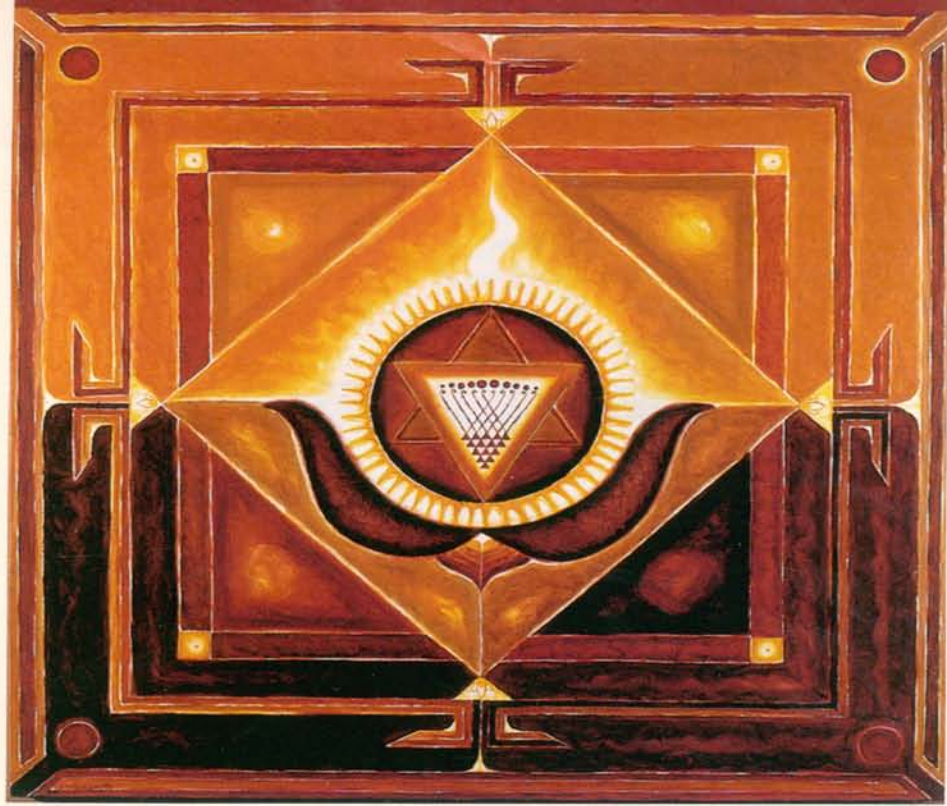
He has founded the Kundkund Bharati in Delhi. The Ph.D. (Vidya Varidhi) in Prakrit language awarded by the institution has been recognised by the Government of India. He has also started the quarterly research journal, *Prakrit Vidya*, to encourage the use of Prakrit.

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FOR PRAKRIT





Acharya
Vijay Indradinna Maharaj

A BUILDER OF FAITH

He has undertaken to uplift the poor,
To this end, he has built hostels, schools
and homes that cater to the most
economically backward of his followers

Acharya Vijay Indradinna Surushwar Maharaj is a most respected saint of the Shwetambar Jain tradition. Born in a Parmar Kshatriya family in the village of Salpura of Vadodara district in 1923, he spent his childhood in a very religious and pious atmosphere. Unfortunately, when he was but ten years of age, he lost both his parents.

At the age of 11, he happened to visit Damoi, 22 km. away from Salpura and came in contact with Rangvijayji Maharaj. Here he received his early education in Jain *dharma*. From Damoi, he went to Bodeli and stayed in the hostel there till he was 17 years old.. He was given *Bhagawati diksha* in 1941 in Narsanda village by Vinay-Vijayji Maharaj and became a Jain *muni* with the name Indravijay.



From Gujarat he travelled to Rajasthan, where he received higher *diksha* from Vikashchandra Suriiji Maharaj in 1945. Seven years after his *diksha*, he left Rajasthan and came in contact with Acharya Vijay Vallabh Suriiji Maharaj in Sadari Nagar, Punjab. Here began his true development and he learnt Sanskrit, Prakrit and Hindi. He was taught *Agams* by the Acharya and remained in his service till 1954. When, Acharya Vijay Vallabh Suriiji Maharaj left for his heavenly abode, his chief disciple, Acharya Vijay Samudraji was declared as his *pattadhar*. Muniraj Indravijay travelled with him and was conferred the *Ganipad* in 1954. He now dedicated himself to propagating Jainism among the Parmar Kshatriyas with the blessings of Acharya Vijay Samudraji.

Parmar Kshatriyas were scattered through a 100 km. region of Panchamahar district, in more than 700 villages. Thanks to Muniraj Indravijay's efforts, more than 70,000 Parmars accepted the Jain *dharma*. A few of them even chose to adopt the *muni* path and devoted themselves to human welfare.

In 1970, Muniraj Indravijayji was made an Acharya in Worli-Mumbai by Acharya Vijay Samudraji and became Acharya Indradinna Surishwar Maharaj. In 1977 when Acharya Vijay Samudraji left this world, Acharya Indradinna Surishwar Maharaj took complete charge of the *sangh*. The upliftment of his economically backward followers, became his top priority.

To this end, he has constructed a residential complex to accommodate more than 750 poor families with the help of Abhay Kumar Oswal in Ludhiana. He has also been instrumental in erecting the statue of Acharya Vijayananda Surishwarji in Shatrunjay *tirtha* and for renovating and developing Pavnagarh *tirtha* as an educational and religious centre. He's also built a girls' hostel, Shri Devshri Jain Kanya Hostel. He has initiated developmental activities in Shri Hastinapur *tirtha* near Delhi and organised Vijay Samudra Indra Sahdharmi Aid Fund in Jaipur. The gigantic tasks he has accomplished are bound to help the coming generations.

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The golden lotus, an icon of purity, grace, beauty and divinity reflects the *atma* of Jainism.
Tha Jain Om holds the five petalled lotus together – respect for life even in the five primordial elements of nature – *panchamahabhuta*.

The divine colours of Navkar Mantra
Arihantas – divine white
Siddhas – orange red
Acharyas bright yellow
Upadhyayas – fresh green
Sadhus – black blue.

SPIRITUAL AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION:
SAADHAK SHIVANAND SARASWATI
PAINTING COURTESY: SMITA NARENDRA MEHTA

॥ नवकारमंत्र ॥

णमो अरिहंताणं

Namo Arihantanam: I bow down to Arihantas

णमो सिद्धाणं

Namo Siddhanam: I bow down to Siddhas

णमो आयरियाणं

Namo Ayariyanam: I bow down to Acharyas

णमो उवज्झायाणं

Namo Uvajjhayanam: I bow down to Upadhyayas

णमो लोएसव्वसाहूणं

Namo Loe Savva-Sahunam: I bow down to Sadhus

एसो पंच णमोक्कारो

Eso Panch Namukkaro: This five-fold salutation

सव्व पावप्पणासणो

Savva Pavappanasano: Destroys all sins

मंगलाणं च सव्वेसिं

Mangalanam Cha Savvesim: And amongst all auspicious things

पढमं हवइ मंगलम्

Padhamam Havai Mangalam: Is the most auspicious one



Through *Preksha Dhyana*, you
attain total peace and relaxation
of mind, body and soul

A Breath of S

COMPILED FROM THE WORKS OF
ACHARYA MAHAPRAGYAJI BY MRS. VIDYA JAIN

Meditation is the art of living in the present. We normally choose to recollect our past or predict the future, rather than think about the present. This leads to a vicious circle of hopes, failures, regrets and tensions. Meditation allows us to stay with the present, keeping us away from the past or future.

Through meditation, we can control the emotional area of the brain. Today, we are overwhelmed by the fear of being ousted in the race for survival. However at the same time, we strive for more luxury, more wealth, more success. We crave intellectual knowledge. In fact, we strive for superiority in every area of our life. But we never bother to delve deeper into the reasons behind our feelings of anger, greed and fear. That's where *Preksha Dhyana* (meditation) comes in.

Dhyana means the concentration of our mind on one object. At any given point of time, the mind is cluttered; however when the mind is made to detach itself from all distractions and focus on one entity, then concentration occurs. According to *Hatayoga*, *dhyana* is the most important gate to attaining *samadhi* (eternal happiness) and the ultimate aim of yoga is to attain this happiness. *Samadhi* is that state of mind where there is

no pain or sorrow, only eternal happiness.

From ancient times, numerous methods of meditation have been practised, one amongst them is *Preksha Dhyana* which means 'see thyself'. Seeing, in this case, does not mean external vision, but a concentrated impartial perception; a mental insight. The word *Preksha* is de-

The various types of *Preksha Dhyana*

***Svasa Preksha* (awareness of breaths)**

Inhaling and exhaling are automatic actions. With some practice, we can increase the interval between one breath and another and lower the count of our breaths. *Svasa Preksha* causes amazing results not only on our neuro system but also on our internal organs. When our breathing rate is regular, the efficacy of the mind is increased.

***Sharira Preksha* (perception of the body)**

In *Sharira Preksha* the various organs and body parts are observed minutely one-by-one with closed eyes. The mind studies the whole body from the top of the head to the toes of the feet and focuses on each and every body part one by one. The mind is sharpened by the act of observing and acquires healing powers.

***Chetanya Kendra Preksha* (perception of the physique centres)**

Preksha of the endocrine system is called *Chetanya Kendra Preksha*. Our body is surrounded by an electromagnetic field. There are specific zones in our body that are influenced by these electro magnetic fields. Once we concentrate on these parts through *Chetanya Kendra Preksha*, we can overcome our anger, fear and endless worries. By meditating on the navel, our adrenaline glands get activated.

Deer Bliss Bliss

rived from the Sanskrit 'Pra + iksha' which means to observe carefully. Our mind never relaxes even when we sleep. In *Preksha Dhyana*, the mind is told to relax through auto-suggestion. *Preksha Dhyana* does not forcefully stop our thought process. Instead, it teaches us to develop the art of merely observing our thoughts without forming any reaction or getting involved. Gradually, the thoughts themselves cease. The technique of *Preksha Dhyana* is a practical and powerful tool for settling down a restless mind.

Based on the wisdom of ancient philosophy and formulated in terms of modern scientific concept, *Preksha Dhyana* can bring about a change in behaviour and modify and integrate your personality.

It is difficult to define the sweetness of sugar without actually ever tasting it, similarly, it is difficult to explain *Preksha Dhyana* without experiencing it. It is best to learn the technique of meditation from an expert. *Preksha Dhyana* can be learnt by anybody. Usually a ten day camp is adequate to acquire the basics of *Preksha Dhyana*.

For an effective meditation session no fixed time is prescribed.

If we just need to relax, 15-20 minutes of meditation are more than sufficient. Before deciding on any fixed time span, we should consider what is convenient, and the reasons why we are meditating.

What does *Preksha Dhyana* do?

- Maintains a balance between activity and rest: relaxation.
- Develops will power.
- Purifies the mind.
- Increases tolerance levels.
- Brings about peace of mind.
- Changes mental attitudes.
- Prevents and cures psychosomatic diseases.
- Aids effortless concentration
- Frees you from nervous and emotional tensions.

Step by Step Method

Posture is an important feature of *Preksha Dhyana*. You must remain quiet, motionless and alert for the duration of the exercise. Any strain or discomfort must be avoided during the session. You can choose any of the following postures:

- **Padamasana** (lotus posture)
- **Ardha Padmasana** (half lotus posture)
- **Sukhasana** (simple posture)
- **Mudra** (the position of your hands)

Keep your right hand on your right knee and likewise your left hand on the left knee, palms facing upwards. Touch the index fingers to the tips of the thumb. Keeping the spine and back upright, close eyes lightly.

1st Step.

Relaxation (*Kayotsarg*).

For successful meditation, you must relax the tension in the entire body.

Concentrate your mind on each part of the body from the head to the toe, one by one.

Allow each part of the body to relax by the process of auto suggestion and feel that it has relaxed.

2nd Step.

An internal journey (*Antaryatra*)

This exercise promotes better generation of nervous energy which is essential for the subsequent meditation.

Maintain the posture, focus your full attention on the *sakti kendra* (anterior end of the spine). Direct the energy to travel along the spinal cord to the top of the *gyana kendra* (top-most part of the head). When the energy reaches the top, di-

rect it to move downward taking the same path, until you reach the *sakti kendra* again. Repeat this exercise for five to seven minutes.

With complete awareness notice the life energy and the vibrations occurring in the back of the spinal cord.

Starting from the *sakti kendra*, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems reach towards the *gyana kendra*. When these two are activated, life energy increases.

3rd Step

Breathing.

This is the source of vital energy and life.

a) First breathe slowly and rhythmically. Breathe out air slowly and then breathe in very slowly from both the nostrils. Practice this for at least two to three minutes.

b) Now bring your attention to the navel region, observe it with closed eyes. You will notice how it expands and contracts. Do this for at least five minutes.

c) You will feel your breathing has become slow, deep and rhythmic.

d) Shift your attention from the navel and focus it inside the nostrils, on the tip of the nose. Now become fully aware of each and every breath. Not even a single breath should come in or leave without your knowledge. Feel the freshness of the incoming breath (oxygen) and the warmth of the outgoing breath (carbon-dioxide). This exercise should also be done for five minutes.

If you find your mind wandering away from the breathing, then hold the breath for a few seconds (*kumbhak*). But be careful not to force the breath in. Initially, your mind may wander, thoughts may creep in - don't try and stop them; just observe them without getting involved. Once you have perfected the art of observing, the thoughts too will stop intruding.

Maintain awareness during the whole *sadhana*.

To end the meditation, take one or two deep long breaths and open your eyes slowly. For beginners, 15-20 minutes of meditation is sufficient.

This can be increased slowly with practice.

Benefits of meditation

Diet control is only possible when the desire to eat actually becomes less. Through meditation we can actually learn to control our desire for food.

If you want to test the depth of the man then test the quality of his language and speech. One of the major causes for misunderstanding is the lack of control we have on our speech. And one of the major benefits of meditation is disciplining the tongue. Sudden anger too is the outcome of an unstable tongue.

Meditation reduces the intensity of feelings such as anger, pride, fear, hate, complexes, etc.

Through meditation we learn where exactly in our brain these feelings arise and how we can control them.

Through meditation there is a notable decrease in feelings of sorrow or dissatisfaction. Tension, restlessness, unhappiness are all caused by an unstable mind.

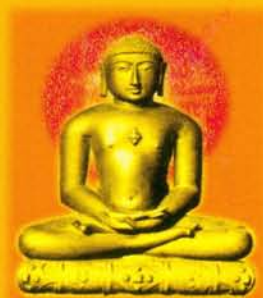
Through meditation the brain cells become so activated and sensitive that one can immediately catch the vibrations going on in the other person's mind. Meditation increases awareness.

Before meditation, you take 16 to 18 breaths per minute, after meditation there is a decrease in the rate of breathing starting from 14 to even six or four per minute, one count of breath includes both inhaling and exhaling. When we experience peace inside us, our emotions will be balanced and the number of breaths we take will decrease. This can resolve many problems like BP, heart trouble and other physical ailments.

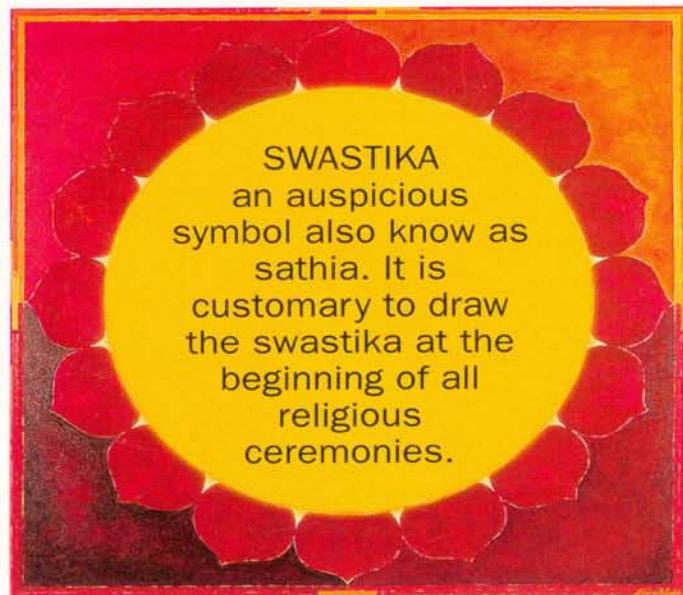
Meditation teaches you to become more compassionate and understanding.

It is the key to improving your mind and thoughts. It is also the golden road to usher in a new personality and a better life. However, meditation is not a magic wand by which we can change everything in a fraction of a second. The change will happen surely; but it will happen slowly.

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ASHTA MANGALA-SWASTIKA



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Temple of spiritual knowledge

The Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (Deemed University)
is a tranquil haven of knowledge and spirituality in
the semi-arid desert of central Rajasthan



At the headquarters of the Terapanth Jains in Ladnu, Rajasthan, the only building that vaguely resembles a temple serves as the administrative wing of the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (Deemed University). In many ways the Institute, established in 1972 by the late Acharya Tulsi, is a manifestation of the spirit and beliefs of a sect which does not believe in, yet does not condemn, building temples.

The religious beliefs of the order are expressed through the graduate and post graduate programmes offered by the Institute: Jainology, Comparative Religion & Philosophy, Non-Violence & Peace Studies, Science of Living, Social Work. All its courses, while rooted in the bedrock of ancient scriptures, strive to be relevant to modern realities. And where the Institute is uniquely different from educational institutes around the

world is that the spiritual development of its students is as important as imparting knowledge and sharpening their intellect.


The prospectus of the Institute sums up the essence of its approach:

Without moral and spiritual education, no amount of material advancement can bring about peace in individual, family, community or international relations. Wars are the product of the mind and peace will also have to be found in the mind.

Indeed, the words of Lord Mahavir: *Nanassa Saram Ayaro* (Right conduct is the essence of knowledge) is the motto and guiding light of the Institute.

It is around this temple of knowledge that the 60-acre campus, an oasis of green tranquil-





ity in the semi-arid desert of central Rajasthan, revolves. Facilities here include a library stocked with over 40,000 books and 5,000 rare manuscripts, an art gallery, a 60-room meditation and yoga centre, separate hostels for boys and girls, an English medium secondary school, computer centre, as well as a bank, printing press, canteen and an Ayurvedic centre.

The university community, apart from the administrative staff, comprises a faculty of 22 and 60 students and only 10 per cent of them are Jains. Regardless of their origins, all are required to follow a strict code of conduct: abstinence from smoking, drinking and violence, pure vegetarianism, participation in morning prayers, meditation and yoga, love and respect for all living things both on and off the campus.

"We are not in the numbers game and are well aware that these requirements, combined with the fact that most of the degree courses are not ex-

**"The university is
a temple, the
teacher the
priests, the
students the
devotee and
knowledge the
deity"
Acharya Tulsi**

actly job oriented, may result in low enrollment. However, what we are attempting to achieve here is very relevant as it becomes increasingly important that we do not lose sight of man's spiritual destiny in today's world of modern technology and growing materialism," says S. Bengani, the *Kulpati* or Chancellor of the Institute.

In addition to its graduate and postgraduate studies, the Institute also conducts a 3-month residential course in meditation and yoga. Students who undertake this training course are accommodated in the 60-room meditation centre and are expected to follow a stringent daily routine which starts with them waking at 4 am and following a strict Jain vegetarian diet that included total fasting between sunset and sunrise.

Alternatively, visitors and tourists may opt for the less stringent 15-day or 7-day course while residing in the three guesthouses (with attached kitchens that prepare simple yet wholesome Jain vegetarian meals), that overlook a garden built around the *samadhi* of Acharya Tulsi who died in 1998 at the age of 86.

Acharya Tulsi was the spiritual head of the com-



Without moral and spiritual education, no amount of material advancement can bring about peace

munity for some 60 years and was instrumental in leading it into the modern era. He was the inspiration behind the establishment of the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute. In a radical break from convention, he established in the early 1980s, the Saman order of *sadhvis* who, unlike traditional Jain *munis* and *sadhvis* for whom the only way of getting from one place to another was on foot, were allowed to use modern means of transportation to spread the message of peace across the world. Today, one Samani heads the computer department of the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute. More importantly, Acharya Tulsi initiated the on going process of reinterpreting the scriptures to



make them more relevant to a generation driven by modern technology. Indeed, within the campus is an audio-visual centre that records all the official discourses of the Acharya.

With the passing of Acharya Tulsi, the flame of spiritual enlightenment passed on to his disciple and successor Acharya Mahapragya.

At sunset, a peaceful calm settles over the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute complex. Jets of water from a musical fountain within the garden dance to the soothing rhythm of melodic bhajans. But for a local family that has come to relax in this peaceful setting and take group photographs in front of the fountain, the place is deserted. The Samanis are in their quarters meditating and the other *munis* and *sadhvis* are out on the road following the footsteps of the spiritual leader as he trudges across the land.

Yes, modern technology may be creeping into the physical headquarters of Jainism at Ladnun, but tradition still rules supreme around the spiritual beacon that is Acharya Mahapragya and his following of *munis* and *sadhvis* as they walk across the land; never anchoring for too long in one spot but leaving behind a little divinity before moving on.



ASHTA MANGALA-SHRI VATSA



SHRI VATSA
an auspicious symbol
on the upper chest of
all the 24 Tirthankaras
showing
compassionate
universal eternal love
for all living beings,
however minute they
may be.

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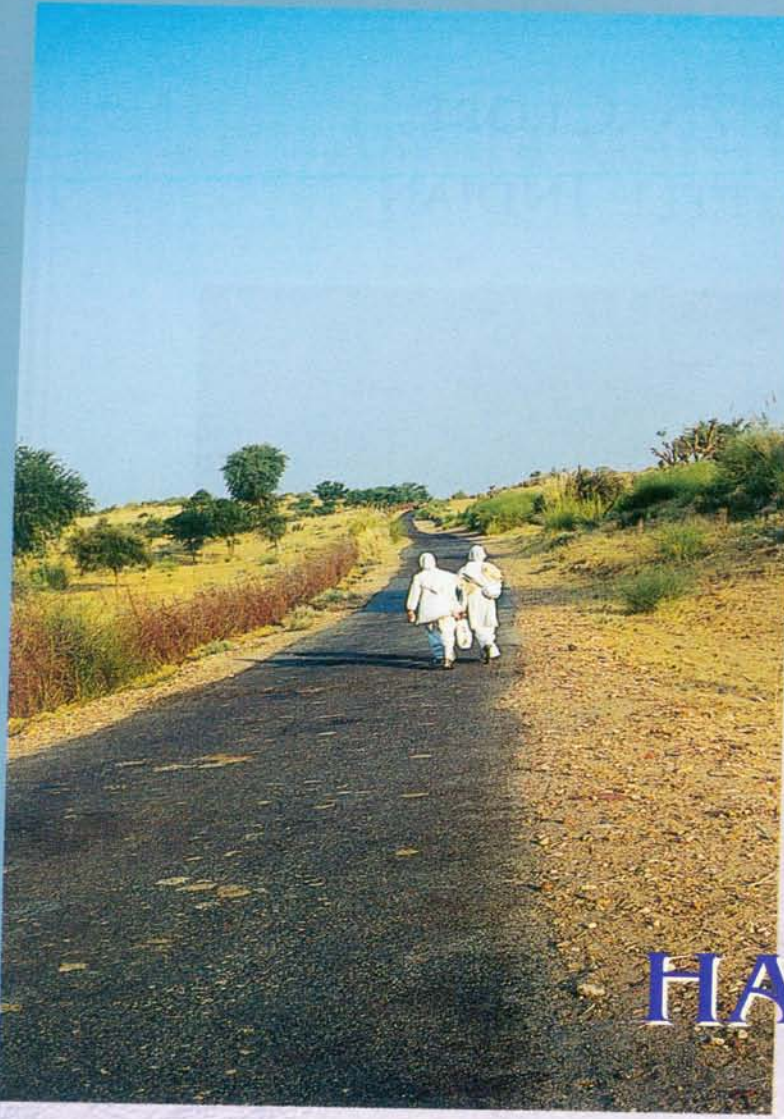
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A smile bloomed across her face and sparkled in her eyes. My anguish over the stringent lifestyle of the Saman order of Jain *sadhvis* had apparently amused her. "But our physical survival depends on seeking," she reassured me in perfect English. She was referring to the fact that every day she and her colleagues were totally dependent on the charity of others for their daily sustenance. Every day they went with their bowls from home to home, happily accepting whatever people gave them. They never asked for more or accepted money ("It's just another piece of paper") for which they have had no use ever since they joined the order.

When writer/photographer Gustasp Irani encountered the Samanis, *sadhvis* from the Saman order in Ladnun, he found himself introspecting and deciding that ...

HAPPINESS IN A DIVINE

BOWL

"But don't you ever crave to eat or possess something special? Is it not difficult going out on the streets to beg?" I asked a group of *sadhvis* dressed in spotless white.

My answer was that winsome bemused smile and a simple "No!" uttered from behind a handkerchief held in front of the mouth in order to minimise the harm the uttering of the word would have on the bacteria floating in the air. I might have been asking the questions, but the truth was that I was also doing all the soul searching. For in this little desert town on the edge of nowhere, I had stumbled upon a quiet little oasis of spiritual tranquility, peopled with amazing Jain *sadhvis* who seemed content in their detachment from all earthly pleasures.

Indeed, these were no ordinary *sadhvis*, but belonged to the special Saman order that was created in the early 1980s by the late Archarya Tulsi, the spiritual head of the Jain Terapanth religious sect. Traditionally, the only way a Jain *muni* or *sadhvi* could get from one place to another was on foot. That they are required to keep walking so that they do not develop an attachment to any one place is another matter. In view of the fact that an increasing number of Jains were settling in countries outside India, the



Acharya deemed it necessary to create a new order of special *sadhvis* who would be allowed to use the benefits of modern transport to cater to the spiritual needs of the community.

As expected, there was a storm of protest. More than just a break from tradition, the fact that the spiritual karma of the Samanis might be compromised by asking them to do less than what was expected of full-fledged *sadhvis* was also an issue. "We of course, had full faith in the spiritual wisdom of our Acharya," said one, who had been initiated in the first batch of Samanis.

Today the Saman order is a reality and welcomed across the community, especially by those settled outside the country. "Not just the Jains, but other Indians, no matter what their religion,



PAINTINGS COURTESY: INTERGOLD



come to attend our talks and meditation classes when we travel abroad," one Samani told me.

And yes, abroad too they roam the streets with their bowls. Of course, where there are Indians it is not a problem. Rather families compete to feed them ("They see it as an honour") and the Samanis must use diplomacy not to offend and self-restraint in face of this overwhelming generosity and bounty. With quite a few Jain families settled in Far Eastern countries like Japan, the problem is not so acute either, as here they are used to Buddhist monks seeking for food.

In some Western city however, it can get a little sticky. For instance in Rome, Italy, where a group had gone to attend a world conference on religion, they would set out each day and seek for food at restaurants. The real problem here was first clarifying what they did not eat and then explaining how it should be served to them. (Since they avoid all physical contact, food is dropped rather than placed in their bowls).

Some Samanis work on computers. Others accompany the Acharya in his wanderings around the country and record the discourses of his *munis* and *sadhvis* who are engaged in the task of reinterpreting the sacred scriptures in light of modern scientific discoveries

But the Saman order goes beyond allowing them the freedom of using modern transportation. It is the administrative arm of an ancient religious movement that is deeply rooted in tradition yet surprisingly attuned to prevailing realities. Some Samanis work on computers. Others accompany the Acharya in his wanderings around the country and record the discourses of his *munis* and *sadhvis* who are engaged in the task of reinterpreting the sacred scriptures in light of modern scientific discoveries. All speak fluent English and/or Hindi and are B.A. graduates from the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (Deemed University) in Ladnun, Rajasthan.

Yet for all their exposure to the world, they are untouched by its materialism. The daily routine of their lives is still starkly austere. They wake up each morning at 4 o'clock and devote the next few hours to prayers, yoga, meditation and a lot of soul-searching introspection. Come sunrise and they are out on the road with their food bowls in





hand. ("We are not allowed to eat leftovers".) At 8.30 they get down to their specific tasks for the day, be it in front of a computer, attending degree course classes or interpreting the scriptures.

After sunset they are not allowed to eat or drink even a sip of water till sunrise. By now they have retired to their quarters where five share a little room with a low-slung desk, a bookshelf and a cupboard in which they hang their one spare gown (even the cloth used to stitch the gown is given to them as charity). After group meditation and yoga they finally go to sleep at around 10 o'clock with only a thin sheet separating them from an unyielding hard floor.

The order is not for recluses or runaways. Girls are accepted into the fold only with the consent of both parents. There are no restrictions: a girl may be of any age or of any religious background; so long as she believes that her karma is to be a Jain *sadhvi*, she is welcome.

Initially girls are initiated as *mumuksus* or trainee *sadhvis* and must reside at Parmatic Sikshan Sanskar, the training center for novice nuns. After a period of around five years, during which time they earn a B.A. degree and fluency in English and/or Hindi, the Acharya decides whether they become full-fledged *sadhvis* or Samanis. And yes, a Samani may at some later stage become a full-fledged *sadhvi*.

Currently there are around 550 full-fledged *sadhvis* and 95 Samanis, in addition to around 105 *munis* in the order.

A young Nepali *mumuksu* fielded my questions with unblinking honesty. "Of course, my parents were disappointed at first when I refused to get married. But I finally convinced them that rather than devote myself to looking after one man, my life would be so much more meaningful if I dedicated it to serving all creation."

Parents do come to visit their girls who are happy to see them; just as they would be happy to welcome anyone else who comes to Ladnun for spiritual rejuvenation. I look closely to see if there was a hint of emotion on the face of one *mumuksu* whose parents had recently spent a month at the guesthouse attached to the Jain Vishva Bharati Institute. I saw none.

The girl joined the other Samanis who sat in a row to demonstrate their meditation techniques. One of the senior *sadhvis* led the session with a divine invocation. Her col-

leagues picked up the last syllable before it died and sustained it as a hum. In the reverberation of their voices, the materialistic baggage that I was burdened with shook loose and fell away. I found myself floating on the wings of detachment. And for one brief moment I had a flash of insight into the Saman way of life: Happiness is a divine bowl!



Epitome of Love and Compassion

Maharaj Vavhamyashriji, lovingly known as Ben Maharaj throughout the Jain community, has a tremendous capacity to comfort and console

TEXT: RAJENDRA DALAL

History is full of examples of women's saga of patience, courage, dedication, affection, compassion and love for all of mankind. One such lady is the Jain *sadhvi* Maharaj Vavhamyashriji, popularly known as Ben Maharaj throughout the Jain community.

Her devotees are spread all over world - USA, UK, Holland, and in the smallest of village from Tamil Nadu to Gujarat. Ben Maharaj hails from a very prosperous family of jewellers. Her mother *sadhvi* Maharaj Sarvodayashriji took Jain *diksha* with her three young daughters and her only son

devotees with equal love, irrespective of whether they come from the US, UK, Japan or small villages in India.

She is the Jain version of Mother Teresa with a tremendous capacity to console and comfort people with love. Whoever visits her gets a sense of mental peace. During the day she meets on an average, hundreds of devotees, yet makes each one feel special.

A prolific writer, she corresponds regularly with her devotees, explaining *dharmik* issues of the day or extolling them to follow some ritual or the other. One wonders where she finds the energy to keep in touch with her thousands of followers. Though busy in her public life from morning to evening, she also follows the routine life of a Jain *sadhvi* and looks after her 50 young *shisyas'* studies and well being. She is very devoted to them, and nurses them to good health with motherly love and affection should they fall ill.

She spends hours in prayers and *sadhana* (spiritual pursuits). Being a *sadhak* of Mata Padmavati she has performed *Parshva - Padmavati Pujan* several times.

A prolific author, Ben Maharaj has written many books on the Jain religion and personalities. She has interpreted and translated important Jain scriptures *Das Vaikalik Sutra* and *Uttara Dhyana Sutra*, from Sanskrit to Gujarati in simple layman's language.



under Gurumaharaj Labdhisuriji Maharaj near Palitana in 1950. Ben Maharaj and her sisters were tutored in the Jain *shastras* and scriptures by the renowned Jain Acharya Vikramsuriji Maharaj. Currently she is under the *agya* of Jain Acharya Maharaj Rajyashysuriji.

Dedicated to her guru and *dharma*, Ben Maharaj has studied Jain scriptures extensively and is well versed in Gujarati, Sanskrit, Hindi and English and can explain the different aspects of Jainism with ease.

Ben Maharaj has travelled by foot all over the country, from small village to metros spreading the message of non-violence, righteous living, religion, duty, pity, pardon and truth.

Several families have turned to spiritualism and started following Jain tenets due to her efforts. She treats her



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THE FRAGRANCE OF SERVICE

ACHARYA SHRI CHANDANAJI
IS THE FIRST WOMAN ACHARYA IN
JAINISIM'S OVER 2500 YEAR HISTORY!

TEXT: NITIN KARANJ

It's nine in the night, and Acharya Shri Chandanaji has just arrived in Mumbai from Gujarat, where she and her band of *sadhvis* have been ministering to the physical and emotional needs of the earthquake-devastated victims. And here she is tirelessly at work before she travels to her rural Navalveerayatan base (60 km. from Pune).

The small group of devotees sits around her, listening in rapt attention to the gentle lilt of her voice as she makes a point. Her sweet voice conceals the determination and devotion with which she has worked to serve not just her mentor Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj and the tenets of Jainism, but all those who seek her out, whether for spiritual solace or nourishment of the body and mind.

Talking about her work – the Veeryatan and Navalveerayatan centres, the eye hospital, the work of education and personality building of needy children... would be an oversimplification of the work of Jainism's first woman Acharya in the religion's 2,500-year history. She is the strength behind Veerayatan ('the land of Mahavir'), which is not just a religious and charitable centre in Bihar, but a global movement pivoting around Jain philosophy and belief. Acharya Chandanaji set up the centre in Bihar, fulfilling her mentor's dream to have such an institution in the land of Bhagwan Mahavir.

She can be rightly credited with infusing a new life into Jainism and its glorious heritage, and making its tenets more appealing to the world, and more specifically to the young generation of Jains who tend to question blind dogma. Says Chandanaji, "They are looking for a scientific

approach." To this end, Chandanaji, who herself, before starting on her mission, did an intense study of religion, grammar, philosophy, logic and several languages for nearly 13 years, began courses in Jain culture, history and beliefs at her two main centres. The number of smaller centres in cities around the world – UK, Africa, US and the Canada – has steadily been increasing as Generation X responds ardently to her efforts.

Travelling far and wide to spread Jainism for more than 25 years, the approachable Acharya Chandanaji has broken down the barriers that bound this beautiful, hitherto esoteric religion. Veeryatan is perhaps the only institution to offer these courses to devotees and seekers alike, welcoming everyone. Chandanaji's emphasis is on the proactive aspects of her faith rather than rituals. (As a devotee interjects, "She never rebukes us if we haven't made the daily trip to the *derasar*.") Says Chandanaji, "Religion should be the source of bliss, not compulsion; otherwise it cannot grow."

To illustrate further, *sadhvi* Shilpiji, one of her close aides, says, "When we talk about ahimsa, it doesn't mean the passiveness of non-violence; as Chandanaji herself says, the positive message of Jainism is that of love, of doing constructive work, with the two-fold overall objective: to help others as well as yourself." Adds Chandanaji, "Ahimsa is one of the best things about our religion, which translates into friendship with all life. However, it doesn't mean that one who practices non-vio-



lence becomes powerless before cruelty. One can't be a mute spectator if you see a cow being butchered in front of your eyes."

Chandanaji goes so far as to say that "the Jain religion has been wrongly presented in some aspects; non-attachment has become synonymous with *abhaav* (deprivation). On the contrary, Tirthankhar Maharaj has termed *abhaav* a sin. One of my aims is poverty alleviation." The other goals include promoting vegetarianism and helping relieve stress by encouraging positive thought.

A life of an ascetic is obviously difficult, but it's even more of a struggle for one who has chosen to not just serve humanity, but also create her own path. Chandanaji has faced obstacles – monetary, physical (even a raid by dacoits) and ideological. "There has been some opposition, but it didn't last because there was no strong reasoning to back it," says she. "I have made a deep study and questioned my beliefs in search of the solution, and I found it inside me. How does one define religion? Knowledge is religion – knowledge that dispels your negative tendencies, which gives direction to your life. I want to stress that mere sacrifice is not the same as being spiritual; sacrifice should also make you useful to humanity."

It was at the tender age of 14 years that Acharya Chandanaji chose this path, which she ascribes to a past-life association. "My family and I used to stay in a village, and one day, when I wasn't even old enough to study in school, my grandmother took me to a temple for the *darshan* of Swami Pragyanandji. I bowed before him and asked him whether I too would meet God. He said that I would realise God one day. The condition of the poor, especially my schoolmates, was something I could not bear to see. So I would often help them in various ways, sometimes without the knowledge of my parents. When my mother came to know about this, she encouraged me to ask for whatever I needed for my little acts of charity. This continued for a few years. One day, my grandfather came home, and told me that some *sadhvis* were in the neighbourhood. Until then, I had never seen *sadhvis* or known about their good work. That was the day I decided to join their order."

Thirty-six years later, she was proclaimed the first female Acharya. Says Chandanaji, "Self-respect is one form of womanhood. There is no reason why it wasn't done until now. I am fortunate to be the first, and I am thankful to everyone for the same."

Far From The Maddening Crowd

Navalveerayatan, run by Acharya Chandanaji, is a unique centre for learning

As the pace of life's journey becomes increasingly uncertain and frenzied, we get fewer opportunities to rest and reflect. To reveal our own inner beauty, a special education is required, directed towards raising not the quantity of goods that we need, but the quality of life that we lead. We need to learn techniques for making our lives and relationships more meaningful and more satisfying, both for ourselves and for our loved ones.

Navalveerayatan allows us to acquire these qualities by learning the true art of living. Located in a pollution-free, clean environment, atop a beautiful hill, Navalveerayatan is a unique experience. Situated 60 km. from Pune in Maharashtra, Navalveerayatan is an extraordinary centre for imparting spiritual and cultural education for all castes and faiths.

Navalveerayatan runs residential courses of various durations – from one day to three months. These

courses intend to develop the body, mind and soul of the participants using modern techniques of instruction, workshops and discussions. Run by Acharya Chandanaji and her band of *sadhvis*, Navalveerayatan focuses on self-understanding and inner peace. The centre runs a special one-month course for young women, comprising spiritual, cultural and moral education for the participants.

Navalveerayatan provides nutritious meals and comfortable accommodation. An ultra-modern training faculty, open air spacious playground, beautiful spots for meditation and a cultural hall for music and art, complete the Navalveerayatan experience. The courses at Navalveerayatan cater to almost all age groups, educational levels, family backgrounds and linguistic preferences.

Set up by the Amar Prerana Trust of the Firodia family and dedicated to the memory of the late Shri Navalmalji Firodia, Navalveerayatan is open to members of all faiths, creeds, age groups and nationalities.







MILLENNIUM SAINT

HE BOASTS NO HALO,
WEARS NO SAFFRON ROBES,
DISPENSES NO HEAVY
PHILOSOPHY. YET BY SHEER
DINT OF ALL THAT HE HAS
DONE AND IS STILL INTENT
ON DOING, DEEPCHAND
GARDI QUALIFIES AS A
MODERN DAY SAINT!

TEXT: MEENAKSHI AGRAWAL
PHOTOGRAPHS: VIKRAM GAWDE

1926

The 11-year-old boy, who went to Muli, from nearby Vankaner to visit the temple of the family deity, Mandavrajji, did not even have the requisite four *annas* to pay for his half-ticket for the journey. In the presence of the deity he prayed for good thought, good sense and good will enough, so that he would be able to donate the princely sum of Rs. 1000 daily, to some needy cause.

The boy felt, as if a voice answered, "Child, your desire will be fulfilled".

1955

Thirty years later, the boy returned to his ancestral temple to thank Mandavrajji for granting him his heart's desire and to ask for another wish fulfillment. Rs. 1000 no longer being a very significant amount now, he wanted God to enable him to donate at least a lakh of rupees daily.

Once again he heard the same voice granting the wish.

2001

The phones ring constantly, as Deepchand Gardi prepares to leave for New Delhi, for a meeting with the Prime Minister, to discuss the agenda for the celebrations, planned in honour of 2,600 years of Mahavir Jayanti. As President of the Bhagwan Mahavir Memorial Trust, he is on the Prime Minister's special committee, in charge of the planned festivities.

The 85-year-old Gardiji does not eat a morsel of food without donating a minimum of his wished for amount daily. He feels that his life full of miracles, is proof of the fact that his tenure on earth is merely to serve God's will. Given up for dead at birth, then miraculously revived 45 minutes later, without any sign of physical or mental damage, Gardiji is no ordinary mortal. For the inhabitants of hundreds of villages, where he has built waterworks, schools and shelters, for the thousands of students who owe their education in both India and abroad to him, for the countless living creatures - from the smallest insect to bigger animals that survive due to his benevolence, he is a veritable God.

Hailing from Paddhari, in Saurashtra, Gardiji did his schooling from an English medium school in nearby Vankaner; his University education from Mumbai and went on to earn the prestigious degree of Barrister at Law from London.

A totally self-made man, Gardiji always had a strong bent towards social service. He recalls making small donations, even as a young student, when he could ill-afford it. He built his first school at his native place, Paddhari, in 1946 when he was just 31 and named it after his father, the late Swarajji Gardi. Since then, his philanthropic activities have spread far and wide and include interest-free loans, distribution of food, funding for Cheshire homes, orphanages, schools, colleges, hospitals and religious institutions.

As per the Jain principle of *anekantvada*, he does not differentiate on basis of religion, caste or creed. He donates equally generously to non-Jaini or non-Hindu organisations. "Jainism," according to him, "is a universal religion, treating

God, not as a creator but as a Divine Being showing one a better path to salvation." It is not surprising that many Muslims come to take his blessings en route their pilgrimage to do Haj.

His sons, Dr. Rashmikant Gardi, a gynaecologist in Chicago, USA and Hasmukh Gardi, a solicitor in London are firm supporters of their father's selfless service to mankind. A clause in Gardiji last will and testament states that a crore of rupees be donated daily, after his death. While explaining this to his grandsons, Hiten and Binoy, he teasingly threatened them, that if they did not work towards this end, he would take rebirth in the house to remind them of this wish. To this his devoted grandsons retorted, "You will definitely have to return, just to see that we are doing twice as much, of what we have been asked to do."

Jeeva Daya, or compassion for life, the prime tenet of Jainism, is the guiding principle of this dignified man's life. He staunchly believes in the code of, "live and let live; and help them to live". This along with ahimsa, or non-violence and peace towards all living beings has been the inspiration for his selfless service to humanity and even other forms of life, big and small. To this end, large amounts of grains are distributed to the needy in remote villages, and he has donated generously to the care of all types of living creatures - cows, dogs, cats, fish and birds.

To serve the poorest of the poor, is his motto, and to achieve this aim, he utilises his personal funds, through the Deepchand Gardi Trust. *Aparigraha*, the principle of non-possession, based on the philosophy of denial, has been responsible for the charitable bend in his nature. "I believe that my time on earth is merely to do God's will and all that I own has been given by God to be passed along to the needy, on humanitarian grounds." He feels he is a mere instrument of Divinity, and says, "When I serve the lowliest creature, I get the highest satisfaction; and satisfaction is the best form of happiness."

Seated under a massive picture depicting Lord Krishna's teachings to Arjuna, in his Carmichael Road residence in Mumbai, situated next to a *chowk* named for his wife Ruxmaniben Gardi, he refuses to take credit for his innumerable contributions to charity. He very modestly refers to himself not as a giver, but as a taker. "I am just a *bhikshuk*, a beggar for the blessings of people. What I give to them is mere money, which belongs to the mortal world. What the recipients give in return, are priceless blessings, which will benefit me in life, as well as, after death, in rebirth. These blessings are my main source of strength. These blessings are the reason, that I am still going strong at 85 and have never been admitted to a hospital. I thank the Supreme Be-



ing daily, for filling my bag, to the brim, with the kind thoughts and love of people."

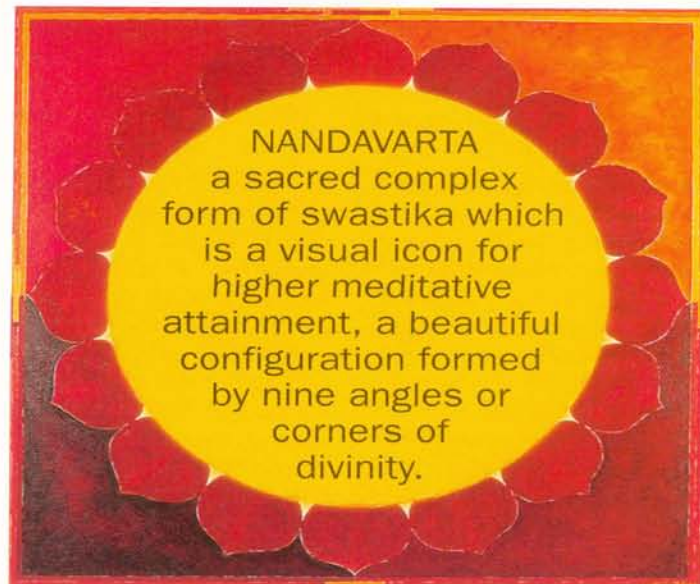
A total antithesis to the self-seeking persons of the age, Gardiji craves no form of attention or personal publicity. He does not accept any awards and nor does his name appear anywhere on any donor or trustee list. He has distanced himself from the fields of both industry and politics, for sheer selflessness is the motto of his life.

Not even a single school, waterworks or temple constructed by him, is named after him. He names them after a local person, his daughters-in-law or his grandchildren and great grandchildren, all of whom are settled abroad and unknown in India. His philosophy is, 'Simple Liv-

ing, High Thinking', and he wants to inculcate positive thoughts and optimism into every moment. As he simply states, "*Jo achha hai, wo mera hai*. It should be our attempt to focus on whatever is good in our personal world and let go of negativity."

This sanguine approach to life lets him live without any worries or tensions, doing whatever good he can to fellow beings along the way. However, with all the humility of a truly great man, this saint of the 21st century, dismisses his immense contribution to society, saying, "I am born to be forgotten, not remembered. I want to be like the foundation stone, providing a firm and strong base, for others to build their beautiful dreams on."

ASHTA MANGALA-NANDAVARTA



NANDAVARTA
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by nine angles or
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PARIVAAR AUR PREM KA
ANOKHA BANDHAN !



Manikchand

Swad, khushboo, Rang... Uttamta ke Sang !

FOOD FOR FITNESS

Science has established what
Jainism has advocated all
along - we are what we eat,
and to stay healthy, you have
to follow healthy eating habits

TEXT: ARUNA RATHOD

The menus of most vegetarian restaurants have the ubiquitous statement 'we also serve Jain food', but why haven't we heard of a speciality Jain restaurant? That's because, besides being strict vegetarians, the Jains also have other restrictions when it comes to food. And the reason Jainism advocates strict vegetarianism is because the very first principle laid down by Bhagwan Mahavir is ahimsa, which means non-injury to living beings.

Many religious and spiritual practices that originated over 2000 years ago, continue till date. It is no coincidence that science and medicine have now deemed these practices conducive to good health. Dr. Ramanlal Shah, retired Head of the Gujarati Department of St. Xavier's College, explains, "Even though the basic principles of Jainism are framed from the religious and spiritual point of view, you can find scientific reasons for them. When we





talk about vegetarianism, the question we're always asked is don't plants have life? Jainism has an answer to this query. We recognise the five physical senses of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing as the principal attributes of living beings. All life forms in the universe are then classified in terms of the senses found in various creatures. The lowest life forms are those with only one sense, the sense of touch, such as plants. But since human must eat to survive, they are allowed to eat life with only one sense, that is basically plant life."

Dr. Vijaya Venkat who runs the Health Awareness Centre in Mumbai, and who is an authority on nutrition says, "Food should be ecological, evolutionary and ethical. Jainism scores 100 per cent when it comes to ethics regarding food. Also because of the numerous restrictions, Jains normally don't overeat."

She believes that the Jain philosophy of live and let live is very important and necessary for evolution. "We can never recapture what our ancestors had by way of discipline. We have destroyed nature and sensitivity. We don't even have to validate ancient culture through science. Tradition is more important."

The medical reasons for being a vegetarian are relatively a modern phenomenon; mostly evolving during the past

half a century or so, after developments in modern medicine established links between certain ailments and a non-vegetarian diet.

Dr. Venkat too believes that our bodies are not designed to digest non-vegetarian food. "The Jains are definitely right when they believe that one must not consume meat. Our body cannot digest non-vegetarian food. In the human digestive system, the saliva and blood is alkaline while meat products and other products are acidic." In fact, Jains also avoid eating onion and garlic. Dr. Shah explains, "The onion is made up of many cells, so eating it would mean killing many lives. It was found later that eating onions and garlic also lead to an increase in *tamasik* behaviour that leads to aggression."

Food Practices with a medical relevance

According to Dr. Vijaya Venkat the practice of having our meals before sunset and after sunrise, is something we must follow like orthodox Jains. "Our ancestors were really far, far ahead of

time. They recognised that there is a rhythm in life - day and night, the cycles of seasons. Similarly our body too has a rhythm according to the Circadian principles. There are three processes in the digestive system - elimination, digestion, absorption. The elimination process is from morning to noon. Our energy level rises as the sun rises, so noon is the time when our energy is at the highest. Our digestion stops before six in the evening. When the sun sets our body prepares for sleep and rest."

Jains normally have their meals before sunset. The food is cooked during day light only, never at night. This practice originated in ancient times when there was no electricity. When a lamp was lit, insects attracted to the flame could die. Besides, going to bed soon after dinner is not very healthy, so when Jainism advocated an early dinner, it was again health driven, besides being religious Jains are supposed to drink boiled water only. Jain monks never fall sick as a result of drinking this water.

Vegetables and fruits that grow underground (roots of plants) are prohibited as a general rule. The reason being, if we pull out the plant from the root, we destroy the entire plant, and with it all the other micro organisms around the root."

Dr. Venkat adds, "About an inch below the soil, there is a rich growth of micro-organisms around the root, so when we pull it out, we are destroying a life cycle."

Fresh fruits and vegetables should be plucked only when ripe and ready to fall off, or ideally after they have fallen off the plant. In case they are plucked from the plants, only as much as required should be procured and consumed without waste.

Roots are supposed to increase your sensuous feelings. Sour and spicy food is *rajasik*. Only *satwik* food keeps the mind clean, makes you *samatabhavi*, gives you equanimity. Alcohol, meat and even honey are forbidden. Honey because you have to burn the beehives to get it and also the fact that you drive away the bees and usurp their hard achieved collection of honey which is not accepted by Jainism.

In the case of food grains, such as wheat, rice, maize and beans, these are obtained when the plants or the pods are dry and dead. Mushrooms and fungus are not eaten by Jain families because they are parasites and grow under unhygienic conditions.

Honey, vinegar, molasses and wine are taboo. So are vegetables, like jack fruit, that bleed on cutting and when cooked look like meat. Vegetables like cabbage are peeled layer by layer, each leaf cleaned and washed before cutting and cooking, in case there are insects and worms in between the leaves. Similarly, leafy vegetables must be cleaned well before consumption.

“ Food should be ecological, evolutionary and ethical. Jainism scores 100 per cent when it comes to ethics regarding food – Dr. Vijaya Venkat ”



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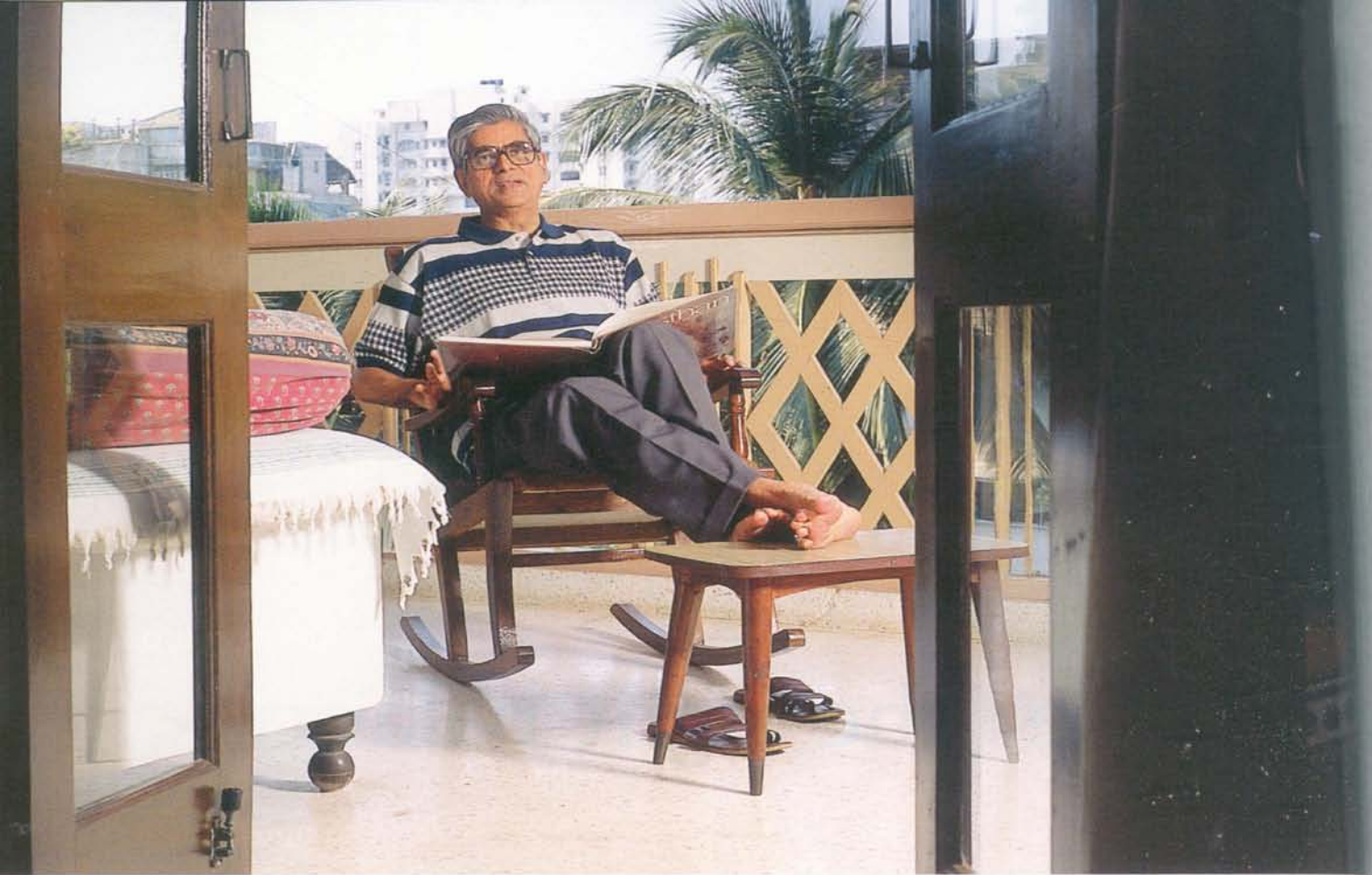


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Putting his best foot forward

As Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India, D.R. Mehta walks tall. But few know of the thousands of the poorest of the handicapped poor he has helped to walk, through his Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS), Jaipur. For Mehta believes that you can only worship God, through service to man!

TEXT: SHALINI SHARMA
PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHESH SHAH

The financial nerve centre of the country rests in his hand, his every decision makes the money market quiver in reaction, crores swing either way depending on the direction he pushes the file. No one realises the weight of this gargantuan responsibility more than the Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India, D. R. Mehta himself.

In a field which had come to respect the predators and sneer the ethical, the man chosen six years back to cleanse the Augean stables was strangely one who believes completely in the power of ahimsa. Also one who has never in his life ever bought a share. "I have never had an inclination for it," he admits.

Let's flashback to February, 1995. The government had woken up to the belated recognition that outdated rules and policies had made the stock market a feeding ground for manipulators. The market was awash with bad deliveries, defiant brokers and floundering corporates. On the other side of the spectrum were ordinary investors, many of whom had lost their entire life savings in the scam. The Bombay Stock Exchange had proven to be the most shoddy, badly run organisation completely out of sync with modern financial methods.

On the surface, a financial bulldozer may have been the solution to roadroll the opposition and

crack the whip. Instead they chose a man of peace, a bureaucrat from the Rajasthan cadre hailing from Jodhpur. As Mehta himself recollects, "I was unpleasantly surprised. I didn't want the post, aware that it was going to be a high tension tightrope walk constantly under the media eye. But my objections were ignored."

The markets experienced his healing touch. "Many of my financial friends felt that drastic action was the only solution to deal with the mess. But I personally feel that if change has to be truly effective it has to be gradual and done through consensus. We set up committees consisting of brokers, corporates, financial institutions and most important, ordinary investors, to give us feedback. Of course, people complained I was introducing a bureaucratic culture to the stock markets and that it would not work. But I am happy to say we have largely succeeded and that's because we made sure that everyone in the trade was consulted. Management is about communication. Ultimately whether people agree with you or not is a different issue. What's important is that they too are involved in the process of change."

During this period, the capital market in India was transformed into a modern, efficient, safe, investor-friendly and vibrant entity. Today Mehta cites the Indian capital markets as one of the best stock exchanges in the world with total screen



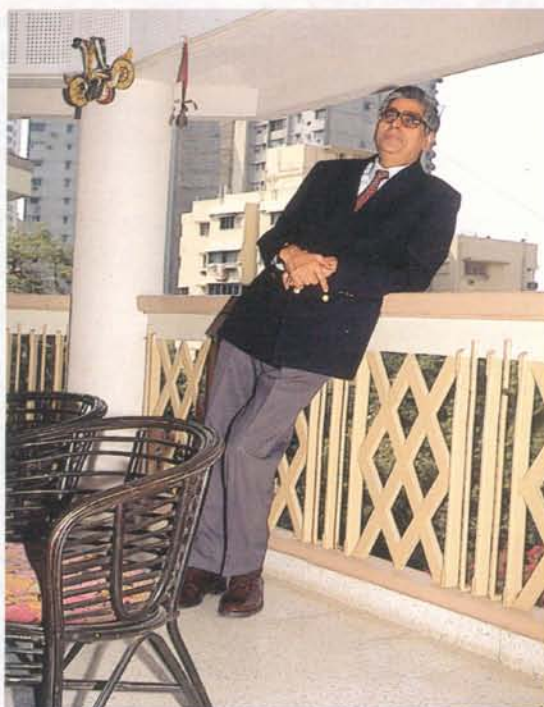
based online trading. No longer do newspapers scream with regularity about stock market misdemeanours, the systems are modern and transparent and terms like *badla* have become part of history.

But for Mehta the successful resonance of the market he has tamed dims next to the story about the journey of his heart, his social organisation Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS), which has the distinction of being the largest limb centre in the world today.

It started when he was posted at Pokhran. "I met with a major car accident. The doctors were doubtful I would survive. I did, but my leg was smashed into 40 pieces; I was in hospital for five months and it took years of therapy before I fully recovered. I still cannot bend my knee. But more importantly, the whole process made me aware of how blessed I was to have the best medical facilities at my disposal. And how the poor have to suffer because they do not have the same advantages.

"I got my chance when I was posted in Jaipur in 1974. I saw the Jaipur foot which had been moulded by master craftsman Ramchandra Sharma.

"It was an excellent limb, even cheap but needed an organisation to support it. I did the needful by setting up BMVSS. In our first year we fitted only 59 limbs. Now every year we fit 15,000 limbs, making ours the biggest institution in the world to do such work." Today the society is the succour for the poorest of the handicapped poor. The limb, food and lodging for the period of the treatment is completely free which also includes rail fare back home. "If you ask a poor man to pay even a token amount it is the equivalent of saying 'you people don't have the money so get out'. Even if a poor man and his family arrive in middle of the



“ The path to salvation is clear - if you do something good or bad you have to face the consequences of your actions. But people today have forgotten the old sayings, they prefer to seek reassurance in rituals like fasting and going to the temple ”

night we take them in. At every point, they are made to feel like human beings," says Mehta. Touchingly, even the relatives accompanying the handicapped are put up free of cost by the centre. Such is the fame of the society today, that people pour in from all corners of India in search of a limb, but more importantly a place where they are treated with care and respect.

BMVSS today fits about 75 to 80 per cent of the total artificial limbs fitted in India at its centres and at on-the-spot limb fitment camps throughout the length and breadth of India from Kashmir to Kerala and from Gujarat to Assam. It has also extended its reach to a number of other countries such as Somalia, Vietnam, Angola, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Panama, West Indies, Kenya, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. where limb fitment camps are organised from time to time.

What fuels this noble and extremely successful social work enterprise? The name of the organisation says it all. If ever anyone has tried to link the goal of an organisation to the tenets of a religion, in this case Jainism, it is Mehta.

"The Jain scriptures are very clear about this - worship of God means the worship of man," he states simply. "The path to salvation is clear - if you do something good or bad you have to face the consequences of your actions. But people today have forgotten the old sayings, they prefer to seek reassurance in rituals like fasting and going to the temple. But Jainism clearly states that only if you follow the path of good knowledge, good thoughts and good action then only will you be a good Jain. People think non-killing is ahimsa. To me that is the su-

perfidious aspect of ahimsa. Pure ahimsa is when you are friends to all living things, when you actively help them - which is what we do through our Society. I am proud to be a Jain and that I follow the path of ahimsa."

At the meeting to decide on the 2600 birth celebrations of Lord Mahavir in Delhi recently, which was attended by many of the country's leading politicians and industrialists, Mehta was invited by Vajpayee to give a talk. Thus acknowledging the role of this bureaucrat in sustaining the true spirit of Jainism through his social work. Mehta cut through the hype with a simple suggestion. That if the government really wanted to honour the memory of Lord Mahavir, they should set aside Rs. 100 crore for the free treatment of poor people afflicted with cancer. It was no off-the-cuff idealistic statement. As this financial expert reasoned, the interest on that sum would take care of the treatment costs. As for the blessings of the poor, that could never be measured.

His respect for other religions and deep-rooted belief in gender equality also emanates from the basic core of Jainism. "Mahavir says 'You are friends to all and you have to pray to all'. In other words, you cannot discriminate between people on grounds of caste, creed, sex or religion. BMVSS is proud of its secular credentials, it is the core of our approach. If we set up a limb or polio camp on the birthday of the Kanchipuram Shankaracharya, we also set up a similar camp at the Dargah Sharif. Do you know ours is the only Society whose people can walk into the Turkman Gate area during riots completely unarmed and no harm will befall us. Once a Muslim admirer put up a banner right next to the Jama Masjid welcoming the Bhagwan Mahaveer Samiti to that area. The Naib Imam summoned him demanding to know our religious affiliation but he told them about our work instead. The Naib Imam gave his approval and the banner remained. To do good for others, that is religion."

Liberation of women is the bedrock of Jainism he believes. "The first person to have attained salvation according to Jain philosophy is a lady, Rishab Devi the mother of the first Tirthankara. But today we have some religious leaders who will say Jainism does not believe in gender equality. Such a statement is totally against our religion." Typically, Mehta has set up a centre in Jodhpur for helping widows, deserted or distressed women, mostly in rural areas where over 4,000 such women have been helped so far.

His knowledge of Jainism is not just the result of religious idealism. It spans the serious study of all the 32 main scriptures and he possesses the translation of all of them. The most arresting aspect of his simply furnished sitting room is a long running wooden tableau of the different stages of Lord Mahavir's journey to salva-

tion. "Lord Mahavir is not a God, he was a great teacher. If I follow his path maybe I can become like him," he humbly confesses.

And just how does he plan to do that with a high powered financial career which shows no signs of letting up? He smiles, "When I retire, I am not going to become some chairman or consultant or advisor. I intend to fade like a falling star in the financial world. If you do come looking for me I will be in my 6 by 8 feet BMVSS office in Jaipur." Doing what he does best - worshipping God through the service of man.

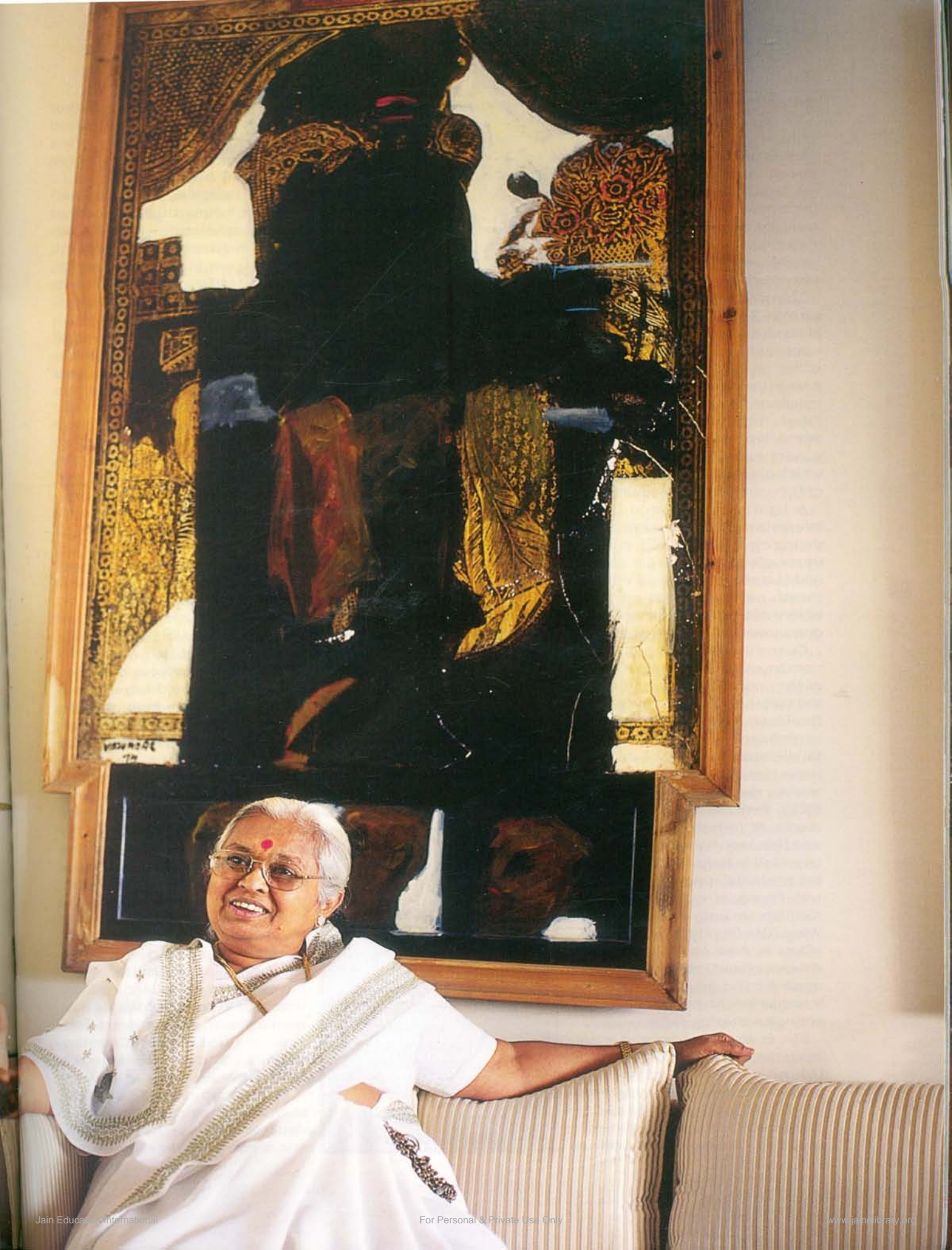


Guided by the five principal tenets of Jainism—ahimsa, *satya*, *acharya*, *aparigraha* and *brahmacharya*, Sharayu Daftary has proved her mettle in varied avatars-as ace businesswoman, caring wife and proud mother of three accomplished daughters. Besides being the editor of *Jain Bodhak*, she is also in her second term as President of the Indian Merchants Chamber (IMC)

A WOMAN FOR ALL SEASONS

TEXT: SHAILAJA GANGULY
PHOTOGRAPHS: MEENAL AGARWAL





“You cannot ignore or deny the fact that a man and a woman are like the twin wheels of life’s carriage. That is why a husband and wife must nurture mutual respect and buffer each other at all times on their journey towards self-expression, fulfilment. For it is only in such secure and civilised homes that an intellectually strong and emotionally sound new generation can be raised...and a bright future ensured for our values, our culture.”

This is Sharayu Daftary - ace businesswoman, caring wife, proud mother of three highly accomplished daughters and a staunch practising Jain - speaking in her new avatar as a committed editor of *Jain Bodhak* - an inspiring fortnightly paraphrasing the way to live right, as per the tenets of Jainism. She is reacting in this edit, to Prime Minister Vajpayee’s declaration of 2001 as the ‘Women’s Rights Year’ and elucidating how gender equality is intrinsic to the Jain *dharma* which grants a woman as much dignity, freedom of thought and opportunity as man.

A lightning-swift mind; a wide canvas of interests and achievements; ideas as crisp as the delicately embroidered cottons she prefers; a tremendous capacity for absorbing information and learning and a work ethic that is defined by “need, not greed” has enabled this spunky inheritor of the Walchand family to go far, in a male-dominated arena, with many ‘firsts’ to her credit.

Currently injecting her special spark of womanpower in her second innings as President of the Indian Merchants Chamber (IMC), where she had the honour of becoming the first elected President, way back in 1981, Daftary has also earned the distinction of being the first woman to be elected President of the Automotive Components Manufacturers’ Association in 1971, the first woman member of the executive committee of FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, New Delhi), and first lady Rotarian of the Rotary Club in her area. In fact, during her initial run at the IMC, she was President elect of both its mainstream body and the Ladies’ Wing. The fact that the latter position is now occupied by her daughter Gauri Pohoomal, says as much for the daughter’s competence as for the mother’s conscientious nurturing skills.

She is also founder and managing director of Bharat Radiators Ltd., an engineering and ancillary unit to the automobile industry which she established in 1958, at age 25. She guided the fortunes of her company, with a

business acumen and humane approach that could teach a thing or two to hothouse trained MBAs, whose focus on upward mobility often makes them lose sight of the shop-floor, where the success story actually begins.

“For 32 years we had no strike, no go-slow and no loss of manpower.” Now this is a record achievement for a helmswoman with a BA degree, who worked on the machines in a sari (oh yes!) and evolved her own play-to-win strategy, with some credit to Peter Drucker, who asserts that the best manager is one who can get everything done through worthy delegates.

“I really believe in that. Rather than appointing quality-control inspectors, I always told my workers that I had full faith in them. I would give them the specifications of the materials and tell them to be their own inspectors in the production unit. This increased both their self-esteem and their skill.” And no doubt, their loyalty. “My religion, my upbringing has taught me that where you are born is because of your karma. Go beyond that and you realise that all *atmas* are equal. Besides, a little praise goes a long way in making ‘efficiency effective and weakness redundant’ as Drucker recommends.”

Daftary takes us down memory lane to reveal how her ‘enterprising’ adventure began. “My grandfather, Hirachand Nemchand, was a reformer who brought the religious texts of Jainism out of the temple and made them accessible to the common man and more important, to women. Till then, because of the Mughal influence, women who stepped out of the threshold were looked upon as ‘loose’. So women were kept at home and denied a higher education. He was the first to let his daughter study. My uncle Walchand was a visionary who started the Hindustan Aircraft factory at Bangalore, among many other enterprises. As my father Lalchand was the executive director of this, we spent some of my most memorable

years at Bangalore, where, because of their presence and precept, I imbibed some unforgettable lessons. VIPs would gather at home on Sundays and I witnessed many discussions about the burning need for political and economic freedom. This is where the seeds of my nationalistic fervour were sown...and I felt determined to contribute to the economic growth of my country. This is when I first dreamt of running an industry.” She was then only six years old!

That dream did not peter out, even after marriage (at 19) and a daughter (at 21). That was when she asked her father if she could

“ Rather than appointing quality-control inspectors, I always told my workers that I had full faith in them. I would give them the specifications of the materials and tell them to be their own inspectors in the production unit. This increased both their self-esteem and their skill **”**

step into one of the family ventures, but her uncles turned down the idea. When she tried for a job elsewhere, she discovered the unpalatable fact that her lineage was the selling point that brought her attractive offers. Around this time, the government floated a scheme for the manufacture of radiators, but it had no takers. "My father was approached and he asked me if I was interested. Of course I said 'Yes'." However, her father had two conditions. "He said you must work on the machines yourself and that I would get no help from the Walchand Group." But the daughter was game for this challenge and the rest is business history!

Having supportive in-laws helped, definitely. "For the first seven years of marriage, we lived with Arvind's parents. As a civil engineer handling construction jobs, he would often be out till late and they saw how alone I was. So they were relieved that I had taken up something to do." Besides, (this with a smile) "everyone knew I was a person who would do what I wanted." A statement that loses its sting when you realise that it was not in being a party animal but a work-horse in a virtual 'no-woman's-land' that her interest lay.

What are the basic values that have shaped her no-nonsense attitude, her high-thinking lifestyle?

"From my childhood, by education and example, I have been guided by the five principal tenets of Jainism—*ahimsa*, *satya*, *acharya*, *aparigraha* and *brahmacharya* (being non-violent, honest, abstaining from taking anything that does not belong to you, being content and observing fidelity). Every one at home followed these principles. My uncle had many business interests but his personal assets would never go beyond a certain point — no shady deals and no opulence even though there was affluence. Enjoy what you are entitled to because of your good deeds, your *punya karma*, but do so with a cer-



tain detachment, is what Jainism says. The Walchand group earned respect for transparency of action because these religious tenets were applied to daily life."

Pepper this strong conditioning with an infectious energy, a thoroughness of approach, exemplary time and people management and you have the success formula of this woman of today.

"I have always had a tendency to evaluate and analyse the knowledge I acquire. I also believe in constantly updating myself. I still read the latest books on economics, business management. At conferences, I would never open my mouth until I was sure of my hold over my subject. Therefore, when I did speak, I would sound better than the others." Perhaps this was the reason she was the FICCI member chosen to meet Indira Gandhi. A memorable meeting in which the erstwhile premier praised her for being

both intelligent and beautiful, thereby also healing forever the Achilles' heel Daftary had nursed as a young woman. She felt she was not good-looking because she was "dark, thick-lipped and round-eyed". "Religion teaches you to face reality," is how she brushes off a compliment on how refreshingly candid she can be even on such deeply personal and vulnerable ground. But then, in the business of life, victory goes to the one savvy enough to circumvent any minor setback and create one's own space, one's own style. "My jewellery, my bangles, *bindi*, shoes, flowers always matched my sari. I played badminton regularly to stay in shape after my three daughters were born." She even learnt kathak along with them, for awhile!

It was from this happy mix, this irresistible cocktail of a traditional foundation and a modern outlook, a healthy and perfectly groomed body and a quicksilver mind, that the swan soon emerged, earning compliments galore as she brushed shoulders with the high and mighty, in the corri-

dors of her business world. Smiling at us from the magnificent blow-ups daughter Kavita surprised her with recently, is a twinkle-eyed young woman, whose soft features and pert figure radiate with the allure of a confident person who has found her calling.

"Yes, in the final analysis, it is your *bhav*, the attitude of your mind, not just your features that make you lovely." Which is why today she can dismiss the extra kilos time has gifted with a merry "I was thin and then I was lovely and now I am fat again, so what?" Emerson, who prescribed laughing "often and much" as one of the 'musts' to stay alive all your life would be thrilled with such a disposition!

Today, Daftary, who figured as the only woman in *Business India's* list of 100 prominent business leaders of India in 1988, is busy with her many tasks as the 'once-more' IMC President. "We provide quality service to the industry and trade organs. For instance, there are a lot of programmes for educating medium-sized units. We help to create pro-active partnerships between government and business, provide timely and accurate information, do research, review economic, monetary and trade policies, all with the goal of achieving rapid growth of the national economy."

That was the desk-time portfolio. Independently, Daftary has travelled extensively and lectured on subjects ranging from management and women's empowerment to vegetarianism, ahimsa and Jain philosophy. Little surprise then, that the Jain Ratna Award was conferred on her because of her firm belief in ahimsa as a practising Jain, her commitment to the propagation of Jain philosophy as well as human and ethical values.

"In 1980 I began a serious study of Jainism under Acharya Vidyand Muni. It was he who convinced me that I should take up the editorship of *Jain Bodhak*, the fortnightly started by my grandfather. It is second in longevity only to Tilak's *Kesari* and it has brought me a lot of fulfilment. You see, when one follows certain principles, one wants to know the philosophy behind them. My main effort in *Jain Bodhak* is to make available what is in the *shastras* in a simplified manner. The road to *moksha* is open only to those with *samyakdarshan* - which is *shraddha* (piety), *gyan* (knowledge) and *charitrya* (good character).

"I am a strict follower of the Jain diet - I don't eat

anything grown underground. *Jaise khaye anna, waise hoye mann* (what you eat influences your mind)."

"I believe in yoga. I do the *suryanamaskar* as well as *pranayam* and *dhyana*. You see *puja* or *paath* (ritualistic worship or chanting and reading of spiritual texts) are the initial steps but finally, the road to *moksha* is through the mind ...learning to eliminate anger, avarice, attachment, ego. The most difficult to give up is *maya* (attachment). Jainism tells you that by good deeds you may accumulate *punya* but to break the cycle of life and death you must cultivate detachment."

Surely it is this constant striving to reach that inner seat of calm detachment that gave her the strength to absorb the shock of the stroke her husband suffered about a year ago.

"The study of Jain philosophy, my guru have helped me to understand the theory of karma.

Students of economics normally treat the karma theory as negative for the economic growth of the country because they feel it makes you fatalistic. That is not true. True *purushartha* is in learning to accept what happens, yes, but also in not giving up or getting bogged down by life. You have to keep on doing the right things and try to find a way out. Yes, life did come to a standstill for a short while but I have the

strength to bear what comes. My husband is a fighter, so am I. Along with my sense of responsibility, compassion and acceptance is the awareness that if this is his fate, it is mine too."

In whatever she does, Sharayu Daftary's motto clearly is, "Give your all to what you do". You have to only read her outstanding resume. Or listen to her 'management-speak'. Or nit-pick with her about Jain philosophy. Or discover she gives research grants to low profile but deserving musicians. Or hear about the exhibition on vegetarianism that she had mounted and how she helped Satish Arora add zing to Jain food at the Taj. Or see how well her daughters Gauri Pohoomal, Czaee Shah and Kavita Khanna, have turned out ("what was important was not what they did, but how well they did it"). Or stare disbelieving at the impeccable hand embroidery she has done on her saris!

And you know there are still some rare individuals from whom life will always take a beating. You know this woman cannot fit into a thumb-nail sketch. You know, most of all, that you have met a winner!



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GOD'S OWN SON

By legend he is the foster son of the *Dharma Daivas*. By the sheer scope and size of his charitable and social deeds, he is the most loved man in his state. Officially, Rajashri D Veerendra Heggade is the guardian of Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala, Mangalore, Karnataka

TEXT: STANLEY G PINTO

Dharmasthala in Karnataka is the perfect embodiment of the word *dharma*. Dharmasthala represents religious tolerance, for here, the caste, creed and faith of the pilgrims are of no consequence. For here, the Jain Tirthankara is worshipped on the same consecrated grounds along with the native *Daivas* and Lord Manjunatha (Shiva). The priests are Vaishnavite Brahmins and the guardian of the temple,



Heggade, is a Jain by faith. Together, they form an enviable confluence of faiths.

For those who come for justice, Heggade dispenses justice, acting in the tradition of his ancestral role as the representative of the presiding deities.

The Heggade in question is Rajashri D Veerendra Heggade, Vharmadhikari of Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala, Mangalore, Karnataka.

The present Heggade, son of





foundation stones for this great religious centre.

The significant architects of the modern Dharmasthala were the two illustrious predecessors of the present Heggade. The late Manjappa Heggade (1918 to 1955) and the late Ratnavarma Heggade (1955 to 1968). Their zealous efforts have not only been responsible for putting Dharmasthala prominently on the pilgrimage map of India, but also enhanced the amenities to make the pilgrims comfortable.

Veerendra Heggade (born in 1948) is the son of

Ratnavarma Heggade, is the 21st Heggade of Dharmasthala. The position of Heggade of Dharmasthala is a unique one, unknown to any other religious centre in the country. According to tradition, he represents Lord Manjunatha and is a pious *grahastha* with numerous religious, social and cultural responsibilities.

His duties include propagating the tradition of *dharma* in accordance to the command of the *Daivas*, who accept him as their foster son. As the traditional head of the Manjunatha shrine, he must ensure that traditional practices are observed regularly. He also has to discharge his responsibilities true to his conscience and function as the representative of the *Daivas*.

He executes his social responsibilities as a pious *grahastha* by extending the four traditional *danas* (gifts) - *annadana* (food), *aushadadana* (medicine), *vidyadana* (knowledge) and *abhayadana* (freedom from fear).

Besides worship and social service, Heggade is also responsible for promoting the fine arts. He maintains a touring *Yakshagana* troupe, encourages the flow of new idea and hosts the annual *Sarvadharm Sammelana* and *Sahitya Sammelana* to spread religious tolerance and knowledge.

That's why Heggade is revered as a man of God in his actions.

Twenty generations of Heggades have devoted their lives to manage and develop Dharmasthala *kshetra*. Sheer dedication, selfless service and pious devotion to God and man have been the



Ratnavarma Heggade. He was a boy of great dignity and devotion and nurtured by the piety of his mother Ratnamma and influenced by his father's administrative skills and dedication to *dharma*. The boy showed great maturity at an early age, and this was put to test when the mantle of Heggade fell on his young shoulders at the age of 20, on October 24, 1968.

Since then, he has carried his heritage to greater heights, not only by continuing to protect the essence of the *kshetra*, but also by achieving remarkable progress in his service to mankind. In the Pergade tradition of generous hospitality, every pilgrim to Dharmasthala is an honoured guest. Whatever his caste, creed or culture, he is provided with free food and shelter.

The Annapoorna Choultry, named after Goddess Annapoorneshwari (Goddess of Food) feeds more than 20,000 people per day. Thus Heggade fulfils his promise of *annadaana*.

Reaching out to the needy and providing them succour is second nature to Heggade. During severe drought in the North Karnataka districts of Gulbarga, Dharwad and Bijapur and during the floods in Dakshina Kannada in 1974 and in Gadag in 1992, Heggade was in the forefront helping to resettle the victims.

As for *vidyadana*, the Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Education Trust provides the best educational facilities possible in the region. The many free hostels provide boarding and lodging facilities to the needy to pursue their education.

Heggade's modern outlook is evident from the fact that he has introduced a unique combination of subjects at SDM College, Ujire, allowing students to combine psychology, rural development with Sanskrit, home science and business management.



When a group of vocational institutions established under the Janata Shikshana Samithi, Dharwad by the late freedom fighter Sri Hukerikar were floundering, Heggade stepped in and these have now blossomed into fine centres of learning.

The beautiful Ayurvedic College cum Hospital at Udupi and many others at Ujira and Mangalore stand testimony to the healing touch of Heggade.

The unceasing quest of Heggade to revive the ancient heritage of arts and science has found expression in another unique institution - SDM College of Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences at Ujire. The engineering and dental colleges at Dharwad, are Heggade's vision for professional excellence.

Heggade has been committed to rural development since 1982. He initiated a project to bring the inhabitants of under developed villages into the mainstream, by fulfilling their basic needs - food, shelter, clothing and employment.

The legend of Dharmasthala

Eight hundred years ago, Dharmasthala was known as Kuduma in Mallarmadi, then a village in Dakshina Kannada. Here lived the Jain chieftain, Birmanna Pergade and his wife Ammu Ballalathi in a house called Neliyadi Beedu. They were simple, pious and affectionate people. The Pergade family was known for its generosity and hospitality to all.

According to the legend, the guardian angels of *dharma* assumed human forms and came to earth in search of a place where *dharma* was being practised and could be continued and propagated. They arrived at Pergade's abode. As was their habit, the Pergade couple hosted these visitors with great respect. Pleased by their sincerity and generosity, that night the *Daivas* appeared in Pergade's dreams. They explained the purpose of their visit and instructed him to use this house for the worship of the *Daivas* and dedicate his life to the propagation of *dharma*.

Asking no questions, Pergade built himself another house and began worshipping the *Daivas* at Neliyadi Beedu. This continues even today.

As they continued their worship and their practice of hospitality the *Dharma Daivas* again appeared before the Pergade in his dreams. This time they asked him to build separate shrines to consecrate the four *Daivas* - Kalarkai, Kalarahu, Kumaraswami and Kanyakumari. Pergade was instructed to choose two people of noble birth to act as the *Daivas'* oracles and four worthy persons to assist Pergade in his duties as the executive head of the shrines. In return, the *Daivas* promised Pergade protection for his family, abundance for charity and renown for the *kshetra*. As desired Pergade, built the shrines and invited Brahmin priests to perform the rituals. These priests requested Pergade to also install a Shiva *linga* beside the native *Daiva*.

The *Daivas* then sent their vassal Annapa Swami to procure the *linga* of Manjunatheshwara from Kadri, Mangalore. Subsequently, the Manjunatha temple was built around the *linga*.

Around the 16th century, Devaraja Heggade invited Vadiraja Swami of Udupi to visit the place. The Swamiji gladly came, but refused to accept *bhiksha* (food offering) because the idol of Lord Manjunatha has not been consecrated according to the Vedic rites. Heggade then requested the Swami to do so and the Swami named the place Dharmasthala - the abode of religion and charity.

Thus the roots of charity and religious tolerance established by the Pergades 800 years ago, have been nurtured and strengthened by the Heggade family, the word Heggade being a derivative of Pergade.

To begin with, 80 villages in Belthangady district were adopted. Today the smiling faces of 12,000 families speak volume about the success of this unique experiment in social upliftment.

Constant interaction, regular follow-up and effective co-ordination have been the hallmark of this project. This success had led Heggade to widen the horizon and reach of this project.

Mass marriage is another important concept introduced by Heggade in 1972, to eradicate social evils like dowry, casteism, untouchability and financial debt. Mass marriages are just one facet of Heggade's efforts to bring people together and decrease the burden of marriage expenses. Today the event has become an an-

One Man's Mission

Pragathi Bandhu is based on the concept of self-help and pooling of resources among farmers.

Jnana Jyothi is a programme in collaboration with the National Literacy Mission.

Jnana Vikasa enlightens rural women and propagates concepts like family planning, small savings, child health.

Rudseti (Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute) trains village youth in agricultural and allied activities, sets up micro-enterprises or small business.

Rudseti aims to halt the migration process from villages to cities in search of employment. The institute has so far trained over 42,000 individuals and the success rate has been over 65 per cent.

eshwara Cultural and Research Foundation conducts research on literature, religion, arts and crafts and has been responsible for preserving over 5,000 priceless manuscripts and antiques. The ancient scripts are being deciphered by scholars and translated into modern language so that gems of ancient literature may once again find their true place in Indian literature.

The Manjusha museum at Dharmasthala is a treasure house that displays a priceless collection of sculptures, paintings, icons and other works of art. This

is but one example of Heggade's unceasing efforts to preserve culture. Over the years, Heggade has also put together a collection of horse drawn carriages and vintage cars that could well docu-

ment the history of automotive transportation. These vintage beauties have been restored to pristine condition with tender care and believe it or not, every one of them is totally road worthy!

The neglect of some of the country's shrines and temples rang a discordant note in Heggade's heart and he set about establishing the Dharmasthala Dharmothana Trust for restoration of such temples. Set up in 1990, the trust, under the guidance of Heggade, identifies and takes up the renovation of temples and shrines of archeologically important temples, which are not protected by the ASI.



nual feature with around 500 couples being joined in wedlock on each occasion. The expenses for the wedding clothes, mangalsutra and wedding feast for a limited number of each couple's guests are borne by the kshetra.

The presence of Bahubali in Dharmasthala is evidence of religious tolerance and spirit of oneness.

Veerendra Heggade was instrumental in accomplishing the task of installing Bahubali on December 25, 1975, the work of which was started in 1967, under the aegis of his father Ratnavarma Heggade. The mahaprastishtana was conducted on February 3, 1982 and the mahamastak-abhishekha the next day.

Heggade has made a great contribution to preserve culture and heritage. The Sri Manjunath-

With the expertise of the Archeological Department, the restoration process is carried out on scientific lines. As an incentive to proper maintenance, local inhabitants are encouraged to get involved in bringing back the lost glory of the temple. The trust has spent more than a crore towards this objective in the last decade.

According to Heggade, the trust's next action would be to renovate temples in the districts of Haveri and Dharwad.

Truly, Heggade is a true representative of God. Numerous awards have been bestowed upon him. These include the title of Rajashri by former president Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, an honorary doctorate by the Mangalore University and the Padmabhushan by the President of India on March 30, 2000.



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VIDEOCON
BRING HOME THE LEADER

THE SMAIL



ONCE, HE WAS A DIAMOND
MERCHANT BASED IN ANTWERP.
TODAY, HE SERVES HUMANITY IN
INDIA, STRIVING TO ATTAIN THE JAIN
IDEAL OF *KARUNA*. MAFATLAL
(MAFATKAKA) MEHTA, DOESN'T
PREACH HIS FAITH, BUT PRACTICES IT
WITH GREAT FERVOUR. AND HIS
DIWALIBEN MOHANLAL MEHTA
CHARITABLE TRUST ONLY REAFFIRMS
HIS BELIEFS

TEXT: VIKRAM OZA
PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHESH SHAH



THE SMALL BIG MAN

In a world of rapidly changing ideals, practice and precept often simulate the linear structure of railroads. For miles and miles, tracks run alongside, converging only through the magical melee of the mind and its mechanics - the realm of the imagination. Science however calls it a mere illusion, a travesty of truth, a mere visual deception. Two parallel lines will never meet, it says with equanimity. And that is the universal truth - the scientific reality.

It is not far from the spiritual truth either, for how often does religious rhetoric respond directly to the exigencies of daily life - the pangs of hunger, the cries of the disabled and of those who writhe in pain? Yet one man has struck a balance. His name is Mafatlal Mehta. A staunch Jain, he won't preach his faith but practice it he will, and with such fervour, it boggles the mind. Not for him the hollow homilies of saints nor the long hours of virtuous meditation that religion demands of its faithful.

"I won't be a sadhu" he says with a determined shake of his head. Mafatkaka, as he is fondly known for the bundles of money he doles out in charity each day, prefers to spend his time serving humanity - ensuring that the have-nots have what they should - striving to attain the Jain ideal

of *karuna* (compassion). At age 83, Mafatkaka is a study in perseverance. Through the love and support of an adoring family, he cuts a fine picture of a man devoted to his cause - the cause of purging misery among his brethren.

Resolute that service alone is the true path to salvation, Mafatkaka can convince airlines to part with their leftovers and marriage parties to hand over their surplus food. A true champion of the poor, his benevolence ranges from medical to educational aid, from organising eye camps to polio correction centres among a host of other gracious activities.

Mafatkaka was only five when he lost his father. His elder brother Chandulal and mother Diwaliben played vital roles in his upbringing. While Chandulal Mehta gave him the best education and the requisite skills to set up a pioneering diamond business, it was his mother who proved to be the stronger influence on his philanthropic life. A gutsy freedom-fighter, Diwaliben was simple, disciplined and deeply religious. She had no formal education, yet she developed an innate fondness for religious literature that helped her acquire a sound understanding of the basic tenets of Jainism. Even in her own childhood days in Palanpur, Gujarat,

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Diwaliben was involved in acts of charity, helping those in distress with guidance and advice. After the early death of her husband, she concentrated on cultivating these traits in her children.

In 1955, Mafatkaka first came in touch with Mahasati Ujwalkumariji. Through her guidance, he plunged headlong into the task of providing succour to the poor and deprived, the physically, mentally and visually handicapped as well as orphans. His charity work brought him closer to humanitarians such as Mother Teresa, Baba Amte and Pandurang Shastri Athavale.

In grateful tribute to his mother, Mafatkaka dedicated his altruistic life to her memory. He founded the Diwaliben Mohanlal Mehta Charitable Trust in 1970 with the motto to help the needy and the deserving in all aspects and an objective to alleviate the miseries of the disadvantaged sections of the community.

Though Mafatkaka opted for Belgian citizenship for the sake of his business, his heart lay in India and its suffering masses. Four years ago, this gifted diamond merchant of Antwerp decided to focus solely on charity work back home. Generously funded by his four sons who took over the reins of his business empire, the 30-year-old Trust today enjoys the support of NGOs in Europe and the USA. It receives relief aid from them, including food grains, clothes and medicines that are distributed among the deprived sections of society - particularly in rural and backward areas - without consideration of caste, creed, religion or race. Even the Government of India has provided a special permit to the Trust for the import of hospital garments, furniture, medicines and food without levying import duties. Thus a woollen sweater is made available for as little as Rs. 10 while a hospital cot can be purchased for only Rs. 3,000. His granddaughter-in-law Rupali gives an example of Mafatkaka's simple philosophy of giving:

"When I fast he will insist that I pass over that missed meal to the poor. Your fast is voluntary he'll point out. Theirs is compelled." As one of the trustees Rupali too is involved in the activities of the Trust. Alongwith her grandfather-in-law, she looks after the day to day affairs, meeting as many help-seeking individuals and families as she can. Under the guidance of father-in-law Ashwin Mehta, the managing trustee, Rupali represents the faith of the Trust in the younger generation and their altruism. Besides offering crores of rupees in donations to a large number of hospitals that cater to the poor, the Trust has bought the Khan Bahadur Bachooali Eye Hospital, Parel, Mumbai, instituted by Mahatma

Standing (l to r): Mafatkaka, wife Pamuben,
daughter-in-law Smita
Sitting (l to r): Son Narendra, grandson Paras





Mafatkaka's sons (l to r): Mahendra, Ashwin and Narendra

Gandhi. Open to everyone, the hospital conducts eye operations free of charge.

"Self-sufficiency is the key," says Mafatkaka, his deeds speaking louder than words. Once a blind man from Bihar approached Mafatkaka. With his brief knowledge of music, he sought a harmonium for a living. Not only was he provided with the instrument, Mafatkaka introduced him to a noted musician who accepted him under his tutelage without charging a fee.

"It's not always money," smiles Mafatkaka. "Small things make all the difference." His charity organisation meanwhile regularly sets up polio correction surgical camps. Its projects to install the Jaipur Foot have resulted in a large number of self-reliant amputees.

Mother Teresa took Mafatkaka with her to London to attend her award function, Progress in Religion. Mafatkaka came away inspired by the ceremony. He realised that recognition of any good done by a person is the most effective way for motivating one's self and others to do better. Since 1993, his Trust has presented ten awards of its own - to individuals who have made outstanding contributions in various fields such as religion, environment, social work and human rights. The award is for individuals who have benefited a large number of people through their selfless efforts.

Each award comprises a cash prize of Rs. 300,000, a medallion and a citation.

Among the illustrious list of awardees are Pandurang Shastri Athavale, Baba Amte, Sunderlal Bahuguna, Maneka Gandhi, Anna Hazare, Ushaben Mehta and the Dalai Lama.

In response to Mother Teresa's concern for girls born of unwed mothers, Mafatkaka set up an orphanage for 525 girls called Ma-Niketan in Thane. The Smt. Kamala Mehta Dadar School for the Blind was established for 175 blind girls in addition to another in Pune called the Smt. Kamala Mehta Andh Kanya Chhatralaya. No recommendation is ever required for admission. "The uneducated are open to exploitation from all corners," believes Mafatkaka.

"An educated woman is more likely to understand the importance of family planning, vaccination etc." So following the construction of hostels for blind girls, Mafatkaka created the facility to educate them.

Once on his way to Belgium, Mafatkaka spent some time at the airport restaurant with his daughter. When it was time to leave, he asked for the bill and was surprised to find that it had been paid, that too by the cashier!

On enquiry it was revealed that the cashier was a product of Ma-Niketan. As a young girl, she had lost her mother at an early age and her father had insufficient means to support her. The school had equipped her with enough education and confidence to be able to draw a monthly salary of Rs. 12,000 and to stand on her feet. "I'm your daughter," she said to Mafatkaka even as his eyes welled up.

This then is Mafatkaka, the small big man who sports a divine virtue - the virtue of giving - a virtue that spawns a nobility of soul - a nobility that leaves in its wake a feeling of goodness - a feeling that as long as such men walk the earth, there is hope.

ASHTA MANGALA-VARDHAMANAKA



VARDHAMANAKA
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earthen bowl and used
as a lamp. This pair in
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samput. The lit lamp is
symbolic of
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VIDEOCON
BRING HOME THE LEADER



Bonding Through Jaina

Dr. Mahendra K Pandya, came to the USA way back in 1966 to study, but soon made it his home. Today, as President, Jaina he's made it his life's mission to bond together all the Jains in North America and Canada, irrespective of their language, region or tradition

TEXT: SHRADDHA JAHAGIRDAR-SAXENA
PHOTOGRAPHS: VIKRAM GAWDE

Catch him on a wintry afternoon in Mumbai and he is a man in a hurry. It's his last day in Mumbai, India and he is on his way back home. Time is crucially short as Dr. Mahendra Pandya is set to fly back in a few hours to Staten Island, New York. But he agrees to talk about life as a NR Jain and President, Jaina.

The 65-year-old Dr. Pandya is a first-generation American. He left India way back in 1966 after he'd completed his MD (medicine) from Gwalior University. He travelled to the USA for further studies, then stayed back to practice from 1972 to 1997.

Soon after he settled there, his wife Asha joined him and his sons Sanjay and Rajiv, who are now both based in New York, grew up on foreign shores.

Flashbacking to his early days, Dr. Pandya says that he did not find it too difficult settling down in New York, "As a physician I found it easy," he says. "Settling down socially was also easy as I had two of my family friends living in New York who helped me and my family."

Today, Dr. Pandya has retired from active medical practice. His sons have not followed in his footsteps. They are busy with their family business of diamond jewellery, Ashi Diamonds. Dr. Pandya explains that while the overseas operations are looked after by his sons, his nephew handles the Indian side in Mumbai at his Opera House office in the heart of the city.

Dr. Pandya's involvement with Jainism is not something new or taken up as a fad. "Obviously, distance does make the heart grow fonder," the Jaina President says. "But right from the beginning I have adhered to the precepts and principles of Jainism, whether in India or abroad."

Incidentally, Dr. Pandya was the founder member of the first Jaina unit in New York and he was also involved with establishing the first Jain temple in the city there. "There was already a group of Jains interested in coming together to make an association. The leader of this group was Dr. N.K. Sethi who hailed from Indore and happened to be a family friend as well. Once established, the initial links soon grew and so did our contacts."

What is Jaina? Dr. Pandya patiently explains. "There is a sizeable population of Jains in the US, but scattered as they were, they hardly interacted in any significant way. So though there were several unitary bodies, there was no single unifying body. Jaina filled this vacuum. Established in 1981, Jaina is the umbrella that guides and combines all the Jain centres in North America and Canada. The idea of a national organisation was first conceived by some of the Jain leaders in the US like Lalit Shah, Jagat Jain, Sulekh Jain, Dr. Salgia and Vinay Jain, to name a few," he states.

Jaina took firm root with the blessings of

Acharya Sushil Kumarji and Gurudev Chitra Bhanuji. Jaina has evolved from its initially small beginnings to embrace 57 centres at present. Significantly, it represents Jains irrespective of their language, region or traditions and has, hence, provided an effective forum to foster friendship and unity among all the Jains in North America and Canada.

Initially, as with any organisation, financing was a problem, but now with each committee seeing to its funding and the funding of its projects, things move with a greater degree of smoothness. Over the years Dr. Pandya has seen Jaina grow. "It is the largest non-sectarian organisation of Jains. We want to propagate our beliefs, particularly amongst people who do not adhere to age-old traditions. We believe in unity and not in uniformity. Rather our belief of *anekantvada* (multitude beliefs) tells us that we do not know the complete truth. We can learn from others as well."

"Jaina," continues Dr. Pandya, "is committed to social service and humanitarian activities both in America and overseas. Through its World Community Services it has rushed aid to earthquake victims in Latur (Maharashtra), Uttar Kashi (Uttar Pradesh), North Ridge (California) and Kobe (Japan). In 1998, when a highly destructive cyclone hit Gujarat (India), Jaina adopted

two villages in the state. Recently, Jaina also rushed aid for the victims of the Gujarat and Rajasthan drought. So, even though Jaina does not have its office in India, its representatives here monitor the activities and needs of the times."

The medical camps that Jaina conducts regularly in India in places like Bidada in Gujarat, the Bhagyodaya Teerth Hospitals in Sagar (Madhya Pradesh), deserve special mention.

Doctors are flown in from America and with contributions and donations needy people are provided with the requisite medical care. These camps and activities are carried out in collaboration with the local health centres.

Jaina has donated in a big way to educational institutions like Mahila Vidyalaya in Mahavirji, the Vidyasagar Sansthan in Bhopal and is involved in the Ahimsa Bhavan and Sant Niwas in Aligarh. To ensure the availability of socially relevant basic education, Jaina is committed to seeing that each

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of its centres has a *pathshala*. In association with its centres it is also creating an up-to-date curriculum that can be implemented in different schools.

As one generation follows the next, the link with its roots is likely to become even more tenuous. Fully aware of the need to keep its faith and principles alive, Jaina tries to foster the faith. Every two years the Jaina convention hosts a congregation of at least 10,000 to 12,000 Jains.

"It has become a unique social and religious meeting place for like-minded people," says Dr. Pandya. He already has his eyes set on the next convention scheduled in Chicago in 2001.

It was an extremely gratifying and a proud moment when the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, announced the formation of the National and International committee for the year-long celebrations of Bhagwan Mahavir 2600 Janma Kalyanak and to actively spread the highly relevant message of peace and non-violence. Jaina has established a Mahavir Memorial Committee to actively participate in the international event.

Dr. Pandya admits that the Jains are more unified abroad, in countries like America and Canada, for instance, than in India where the religion has sprung from. "Since we live far away from our country, we have come to realise the dire importance of preserving our culture, something that is taken for granted here."

An important means of preserving the tenets and philosophy is by inculcating the youth and teaching them the importance of Jainism, showing them how relevant it is to their lifestyle even today. To this end is dedicated the Young Jains of America (YJA) and its fast-growing membership is evidence of the fact that Jaina is moving in the right direction. YJA seminars are a regular feature of the biennial conventions and an association of Young Jain Professionals is now an affiliate of Jaina.

What attracts the youngsters to Jaina? Dr. Pandya smiles. "Jaina's matrimonial data bank is extremely popular for marriage referrals. Many Jains have found their life partners through the Marriage Information Service."

Other potent tools that Jaina uses to propagate its views are its numerous publications. The main Jaina library in Los Angeles has over 8,000 books. It has a branch in Canada. The Jaina website-www.jaina.org - keeps the cyber-happy world abreast of activities and current events in the world of Jainism. Jaina also brings out an annual calendar to exemplify its teachings.

The Jain Digest, Dr. Pandya says proudly handing over a copy, is the quarterly magazine of the Jain Associations in North America. It gives information about events that have happened and forthcoming highlights of Jaina. It is mailed to over 7,500 Jain families in America and worldwide - completely free of cost!

Dr. Pandya is a satisfied man today. He lives in a joint family, a rarity in America. "That's because the boys work together. The family that works together, lives and eats together," he philosophises. They are all vegetarians. "My whole family, including the grandchildren, are strictly vegetarian. They do not eat cookies, cakes or ice creams that contain eggs, in fact they buy something only after reading all the list of ingredients!"

The family is involved with Jaina in some way or the other: "My wife Asha is firmly by my side in whatever I do. My elder son Sanjay and his wife Renu take care of the fundraising that is necessary for Jaina activities; my younger son Rajeev and his wife Deepti take care of the publication of the annual calendar." Dr. Pandya himself links up with the different parts of Jaina, mainly by telephone and e-mail. "I do visit the centres whenever the need arises," he says, "or if there is some celebration or function like the inauguration of a new centre."

He is rarely found at home as he also shuttles between his overseas home and India, a place that inevitably and naturally draws him even after so many years. "Nowadays I am more in India than in the US," Dr Pandya smiles. "My friends in New York are continually asking me if I have shifted base."

Obviously the answer is 'No'. His family has put down roots abroad and his work as President Jaina gives him a deep sense of fulfilment. "It's gratifying to see how Jains have not forgotten their way of life, Jaina gives us an immense sense of belonging. We can reach out to one another and realise that yes, we have a common bond, a shared way of life. We are proud that our youngsters too have not turned their backs on our beliefs."

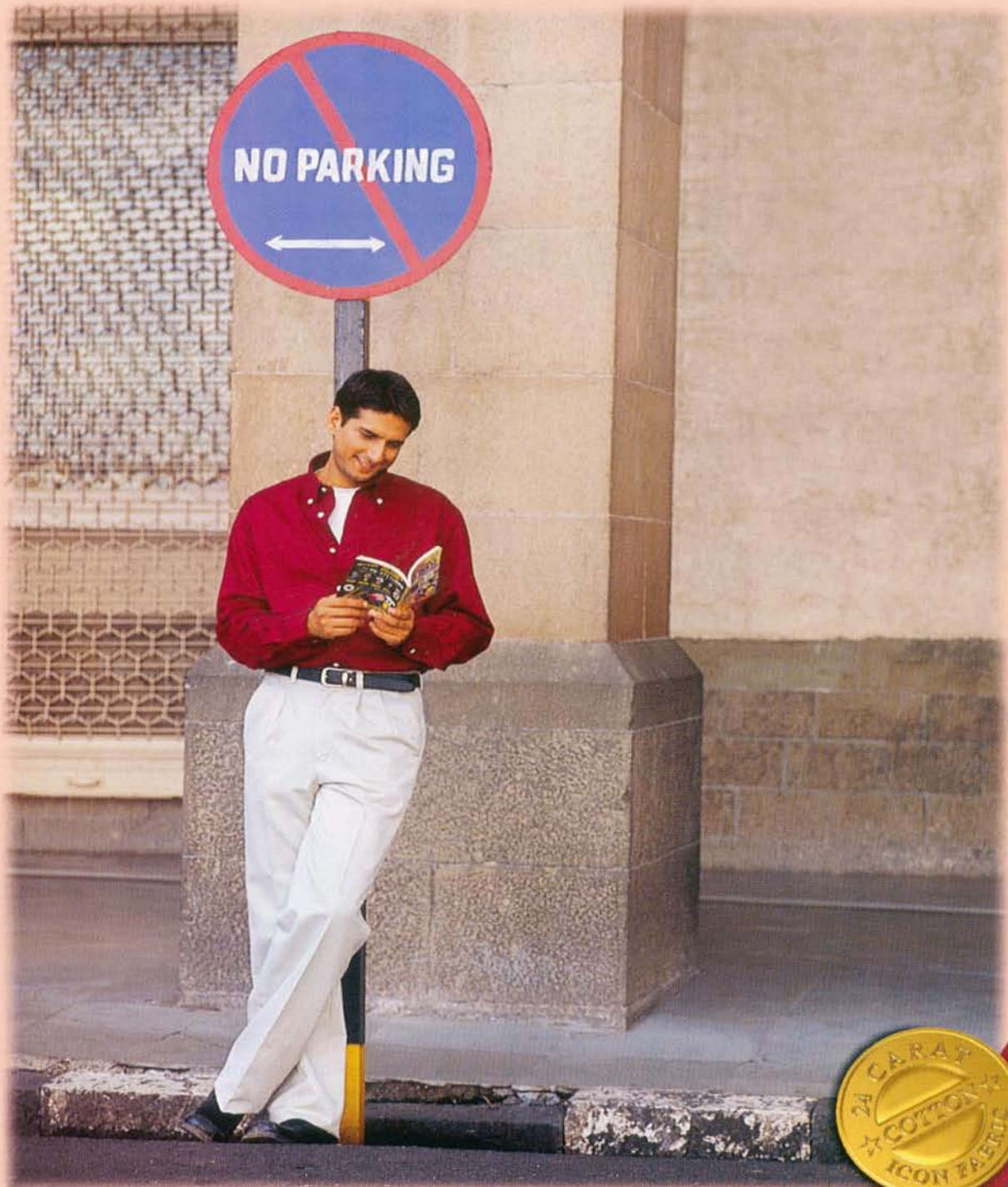
He continues, "The Jain presence cannot be ignored. "Our community is full of people who make a difference socially in a variety of ways and professions and may their breed grow!"

And on that highly positive note, Dr. Pandya ends the chitchat. Ready to fly back home, he assures us that he will return soon to India. After all, he has found the magical formula that helps him straddle two continents... all with a smile!

The objectives of Jaina

- To develop a better understanding of Jainism
- To assist and promote charitable activities
- To promote vegetarianism and non-violence
- To assist in the establishment of Jain temples, schools and other Jain-oriented facilities
- To keep all Jains together and guide them in their different activities

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She has a story to tell. Of the very first time she lectured publicly at the behest of the legendary Walter Spink, at the University of Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1976. The payment was \$75, a paltry enough sum to be sniffled at today. "But it seemed like riches when I thought how nicely it covered the cost of a \$70 camera lens I hankered after! Those days I was into learning photography."

As it happened, she never subsequently charged for any lecture she delivered that was arranged by Spink... But to think that this mea-

gre amount meant something to Saryu Doshi, whose distinguished business family background in Mumbai has always been nothing short of extremely privileged.

"It was my early student days spent away from home that really resulted in a tempering effect, truly moulded me and decided critical turning points in my career for me. But for those experiences, I might have sunk into the complacency of becoming like any other fat housewife, dangerously content with the luxuries surrounding her. Thankfully that didn't happen!" she says.



Widely acknowledged for a research in the field of Jain miniatures, Saryu Doshi is the former editor of *Marg* magazine and present honorary director of Mumbai's prestigious National Gallery of Modern Art. Here she discusses the influences and interactions that have shaped her learning and her life

TEXT: MEHER MARFATIA
PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHESH SHAH

OF MINIATURES, MUSEUMS AND MORE...

Here is what did happen instead.

Following a comfortable childhood spent at Mumbai's Laburnum Road with parents Nagindas and Leelavati Daftary and attending two schools, Queen Mary's and St. Columba, she went to Elphinstone College and to the J.J. School of Arts. "But it was with a constant yearning for something else; I wasn't content with carrying on being educated until married off or something."

Marriage to automotive engineer Vinod Doshi from the illustrious Premier Automobiles clan may not have shaken things up for her had it not been

for her husband. "I was barely inspired to do anything, he was the true motivator." Travelling with him through the US and Europe, she registered 'haphazardly', for courses ranging from history of Indian art and philosophy to psychology and adult education. "It was only after I enrolled at Ann Arbor University that things crystallised a bit more. From being a good student in school, I had dropped to becoming a mediocre one in college, but here I was suddenly hitting A's! It was heady. I felt I was finally getting somewhere I liked. I pushed myself to work better and better, and

finished with Honours. Before long I was being courted by professors to join their history of art department! Those fabulous years taught me three essential values I needed to possess—an inquiring mind hungry for stimulation, meticulousness of detail and the spirit of independent research. Ann Arbor opened up everything for me.”

Small wonder, then, that getting back to India proved temporarily disillusioning. In Mumbai she combed bookstores for art books and struggled to explore what she could do with her learning. She was encouraged by Dr. Moti Chandra (“my guru in the total sense of the word—his wide-ranging connoisseur’s interests bequeathed me the gift of eclecticism”) and his son Pramod who was assistant curator at The Prince of Wales Museum.

When her husband was posted to the company factory town in Satara, Doshi continued studying, carting volumes on Indian art by the bagful there.

“Dr. Moti Chandra spurred and honed my intellectual development, unlocking the original thinking in me that he insisted every art historian must possess,” she acknowledges.

It was a letter from a Jain scholar urging the Chandras to write on relatively unexplored Digambar Jain manuscripts (existing research focussed largely on the Shvetambar Jain tradition) in temple libraries, that got her involved in the pioneering venture. This was what shaped into her celebrated Ph.D. subject.

“Researching it made for a humbling, maturing, enriching experience,” she says. Combing the country to look for evidence substantiating the work, Doshi remembers “going off on several wild goose chases, but research cannot pass up any chances”. One of the more exciting moments along this journey of learning took place on an afternoon in the late ‘60s (she completed her thesis in 1971) at Karanja near Nagpur. Expecting to simply explore a couple of manuscripts and superb bronzes at a temple that was undergoing extensive repair, she was asked by the priests to stay on for tea. Though aware that her family was waiting for her to join them later in the evening in Nagpur, she did not want to offend the priests and accepted. Which is how she stumbled upon an incredible find.

Rolled up unobtrusively at the far end of an inner room lay a tired looking scroll she sensed needed closer examining. Getting to it was like clearing an obstacle course, what with wood and

glass underfoot, but when finally unfurled she found herself riveted by the most magnificent 40 x 33 feet fully painted scroll dating to circa 1680-1700. “Thank God I waited for that cup of tea,” she chuckles, adding, “The lesson I learnt here was that it was as important for me to have inspired the priests’ trust as to have aroused my own curiosity.” The photographer had to improvise a makeshift backdrop—the delicate cloth was carefully stretched onto the four corners of a *charpoy* to have sections of it shot!

From studying Mughal painting at the University of Chicago to teaching Indian miniature painting at Ann Arbor to lecture tours taking her to Berkeley, she has done it all. With her young son Maitreya enjoying the rare privilege of observing

such a full life at close quarters. “Mittu travelled often with me, and back home grew used to having good friends like Girish Karnad, Satyadev Dubey, Vijay Tendulkar, Shyam Benegal and Sai Paranjpye dropping in regularly and staying over impromptu. It must have been a stimulating environment for a child. And I cannot stress this enough—I could never have achieved even a tenth of what I have, were it not for the support of the family, especially my wonderful in-laws - Walchand Hirachand and Lalitabai.”

The summer of 1976 saw her join *Marg*, India’s premier magazine of the arts, as associate editor with the veteran Mulk Raj Anand at the helm. “Regardless of the fact that we didn’t

see eye to eye on practically everything, I’m grateful to Mulk for opening my eyes to a sound reality: the demystification of art, that it should be covered for laymen, not just scholars.” Teaching courses in the US and writing filled the next ten years, until Roshan Sabavala of *Marg* invited her to take over as its editor— a post Doshi held from 1981 to 1986 and for which she is widely respected till date. She set up systems for the magazine, wrote for it and guest edited four hugely successful books: *Homage to Shrivana Belgola*, *Masterpieces of Jain Painting*, *Tribal India* and *India and Egypt: Influences and Interactions*.

While born a Shvetambar Jain herself and married into a Digambar sect family, Doshi reveals she came to respect the ritualistic aspect of the latter cult after a particular incident. Present for the *mahamastakabhisheka* (lustration) of the Bahubali statue at Shrivana Belgola, Karnataka, she sensed “indifference change to rapture” at

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TOO

the dignity of the moving sight before her. "Initially, I didn't think much of 1000 gallons of milk being poured over a statue in a country where children could be fed the same. But I was compelled to revise my opinion. It was mind-blowing to see the beatific expression on the faces of hundreds of devotees dancing under the statue in the hope of catching stray drops of milk flowing down. In a flash it came to me that religious ecstasy can never be computed in strictly practical terms, there is a certain place in life for specific rituals too."

What does Jainism mean to her personally? "There are two very definite aspects to it for me. For one, like most Jains, I strictly adhere to our basic tenet of reverence for life. I'm a staunch vegetarian and I don't pluck flowers, etc. Equally vital is the sense of detachment I try to apply to various situations daily. There is a certain attempt to not lust after possessions. Surround yourself with lovely things, appreciate them, but don't stay bound to them. This way it is not as if you don't feel any loss, but without attachment, it's that much easier to come to terms with it. The West sadly lacks this beautiful Indian concept."

Appointed honorary director of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) when it opened in 1996, she has steered the show here admirably, considering the fact that she has had only a limited background in contemporary art and never administered a museum before. Curating innumerable shows herself, she confesses she is partial to those displaying local talents. "Although a national museum, I believe we owe Mumbai artists first. And, ideally, I should like the NGMA to go beyond an exhibition gallery and serve as an area for a permanent collection."

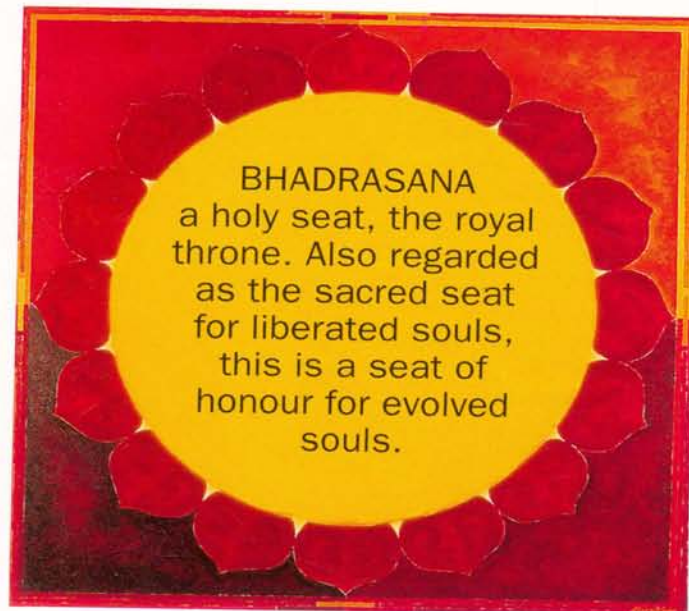
How does she reconcile the scholar in her with the socialite people see with as obvious visibility? At once erudite and extremely popular on the social circuit, she revels in cultivating both sides to her personality. Accordingly, she is an impeccably groomed silk sari-and-pearls Rotarian, city grand dame and charming hostess to international litterateurs and political ambassadors alike.

Gliding with seemingly effortless ease between these worlds, she manages to make time to play the "fastidious housewife" and doting grandmother to Maitreya's seven-year-old son Sahir, besides indulging in her love for classical music and Indian film music with equal fervour.

The wisdom of her words stays with you: "Ultimately, everything is about craftsmanship. I relish a good thriller novel if its language is superbly crafted—which is why I prefer a Robert Ludlum over a John Grisham novel, no matter how gripping the latter story. Life is all about harmonious crafting, be it in the elements of a miniature painting, the lines of a poem, the stringing of a necklace or a human relationship." Touché.



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Gem OF A MAN

A STAUNCH ADVOCATE OF JAINISM
AND VEGETARIANISM, THE KHADI-CLAD
SURENDRA MEHTA, IS A FAR CRY FROM
WHAT YOU'D EXPECT A DIAMOND
MERCHANT TO LOOK LIKE

TEXT: SHIVANI MAHESHWARI
PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD PEREIRA

His rise may not have been as meteoric as Dhirubhai Ambani. He may not have set up an empire as big as the Birlas. However, in his line of business, he stands leagues above the rest. His name glows unparalleled.

Surendra Manilal Mehta's reputation glitters like the diamonds he deals in. With a wealth of experience and goodwill earned over 60 years, this businessman and philanthropist has set new standards in the diamond trade and nurtured the values that has made Mehta Jewellery a household name among discerning buyers of jewellery. It is believed

that one can walk into the Mehta Jewellery showroom in Chennai blindfolded and not be hoodwinked.

Mehta's simplicity and reticence has kept him away from the media blaze all these years. In fact, the 77-year-old jeweller timidly confesses that this would be one of his first interviews where he would delve so deeply into his personal life. Dressed in white khadi *dhoti* and *kurta*, which he has spun himself, he looks more of a freedom fighter than a jeweller. The only trace of his trade is the 1.6-carat diamond ring on his finger..

Born in 1923 at Palanpur in Gujarat, Mehta had



an affluent upbringing. His father was a government servant, a deputy political agent — the highest post an Indian could achieve in the pre-Independence era. Mehta enjoyed many luxuries that only a few Indians could avail of those days. With easy accessibility to a club, he developed a deep interest in sports like football, hockey, cricket and badminton. Even today, in his spare time, he turns on television only to watch sports.

Mehta realised from childhood that he could not be totally disassociated from the family business. His three uncles were in the diamond trade. Yet, he nurtured hopes of becoming a doctor and even enrolled in the science stream, but the process of dissecting animals made him uneasy. He then decided to become a barrister, but fate obviously had other plans in store for him.

When he was barely 17, one of his uncles, Bapalal, who had successfully set up Bapalal & Co. Jewellers in Chennai, suddenly passed away. Young Mehta was immediately summoned to shoulder part of the responsibility. "At that time, there was no question of protesting or questioning. You simply complied with orders from the elders," he says.

In Chennai, he was put under the tutelage of a senior assistant and trusted aide in the business, Narayan Das. Like an uncut rock, the raw Mehta too was chiselled and polished, till a diamond emerged. His worth and respect grew with time.

For almost half a century, Mehta worked assiduously and managed the family business. From small traders, they grew to become one of the premier jewellers in South India. With a high degree of mastery and integrity, Mehta soon became a legend in his own right at Bapalal & Co. Jewellers. People came from far to seek his advice.

However, a decade ago, Mehta was put to the biggest test of his life. Differences in the family forced him to take a heart-wrenching decision - to break away from Bapalal. This was in 1992, the "darkest period of his life", he declares.

He spent months discussing the dilemma with his two sons Tushar and Abhay. A host of business ideas were thrown up, including construction, garment export, speculation in the share market, but none appealed to him. His heart lay in diamonds. "I'm glad that my sons accepted all my suggestions and abided by my advice."

Surendra Mehta finally started his own independent business on July 9, 1992, at the ripe age of 70. A grand state-of-the-art 10,000 sq ft showroom was opened in Chennai, offering a dazzling range of contemporary as well as traditional jewellery and silverware. In a short span of less than eight years, Mehta Jewellery has become one of the most reputed in the region with an annual turnover exceeding Rs. 5 crore.

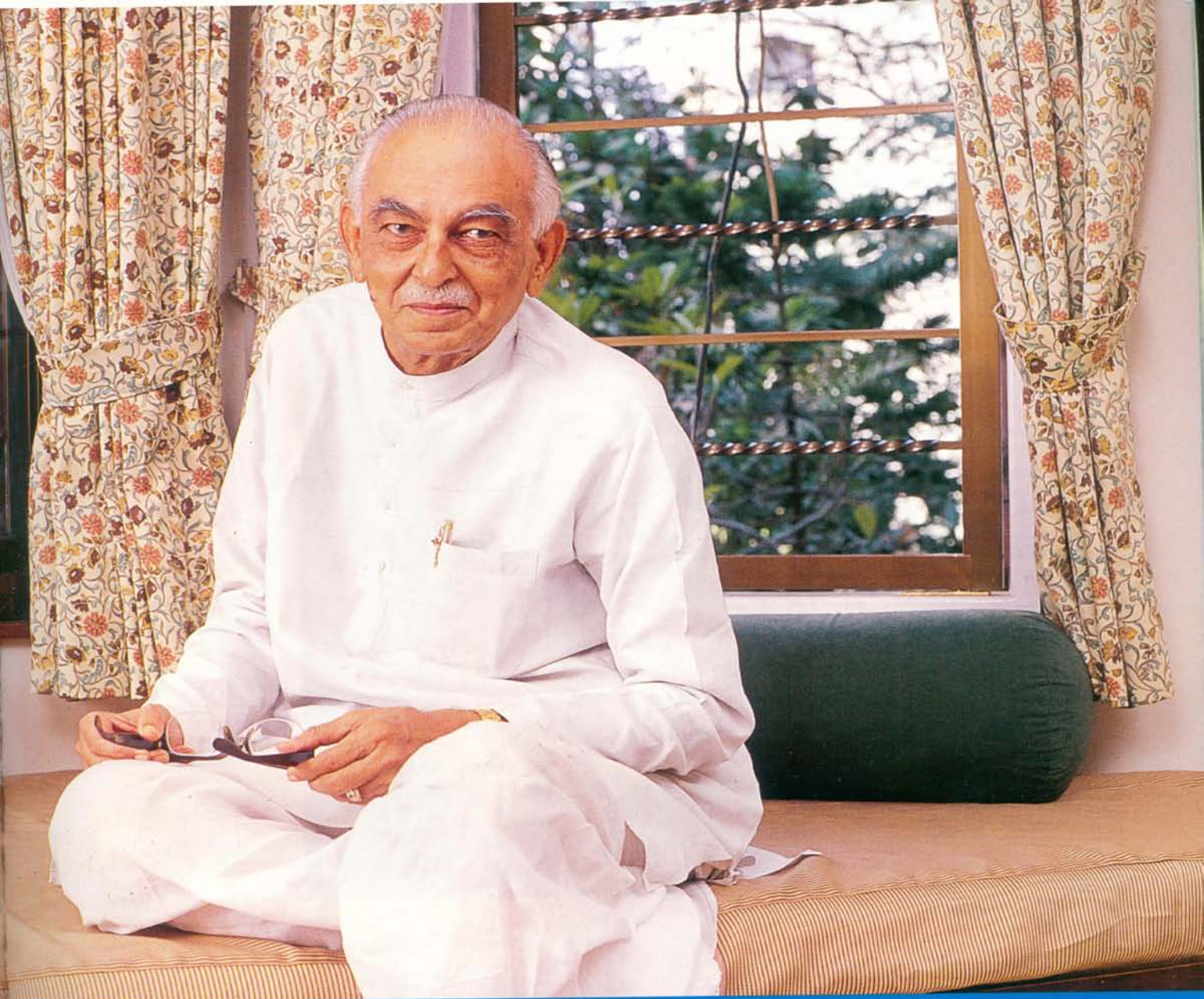
"We are moderate jewellers," maintains the highly principled Mehta. "We may not be million-

aires, but we have enough to satisfy our needs. We have always been taught to stay away from greed. However, these days, people have become very materialistic. They want to own 100 pairs of shoes, 50 suits..." Mehta, in contrast, manages with two pairs of *chappals* and shoes and drives an 11-year-old Contessa.

To many, Mehta seems to be in the wrong business, a business that appears to be in conflict with his credence. However, the diamond master clarifies that "It is only now that ornaments have begun to symbolise opulence and make a fashion statement. There was a saying," he recollects, "that if you have a rupee, you invest 25 paise in land, 25 in jewellery, 25 in business and the remaining quarter you reserve. In the olden days, there was religious significance attached to jewellery. It also served as high security for women. But today its sanctity is lost."

Mehta's other deep-rooted passion in life is veg-





etarianism. He has been conscientiously promoting vegetarianism since the early 50s. He started his campaign way back in 1959 when he joined the Indian Vegetarian Congress headquartered in Chennai. Thereafter, he has attended and actively participated in 10 World Vegetarian Congress across the globe.

In 1990, he was elected as President of the International Vegetarian Union, the first Asian to hold the post. He was given a fellowship for his long and dedicated service in promoting the cause of vegetarianism. His fervour can be gauged by his five-page bio data, of which three are devoted to his milestone efforts in promoting vegetarianism.

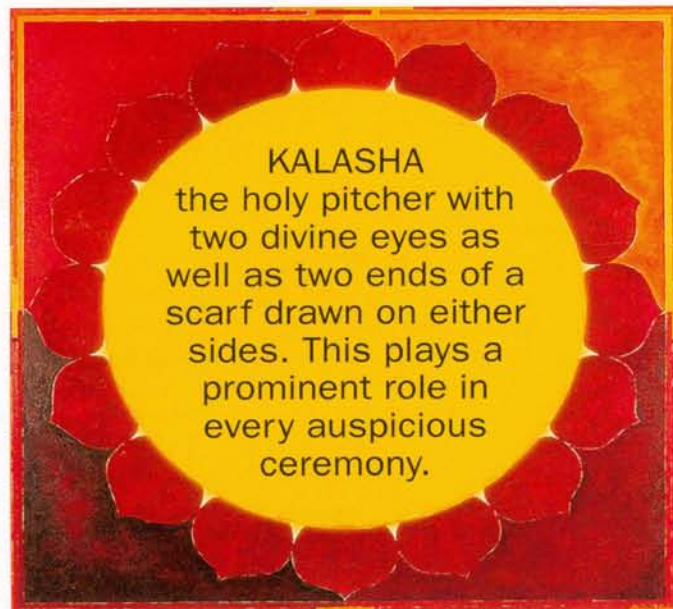
Six years later, Mehta set up the Ahimsa Research Foundation, a non-political, non-religious, non-profit making organisation aimed at promoting vegetarianism, animal welfare, compassion for living creatures, farming without chemical fertilisers and poisonous pesticides. In fact, he

enthusiastically shows papers of a court case that his foundation is currently fighting in Calcutta against an 'unscrupulous' slaughterhouse, which is killing a large number of animals daily.

The Managing Trustee of Mehta Jewellery is also a staunch promoter of Jainism and its tenets. He is involved in many social and religious activities and has been the president of the Gujarati Svetamber Sthankwasi Jain Association and the Research Foundation of Jainology. He has also been one of the major patrons of Jain Vidyaashram, a day-cum-residential school spread over ten acres in Chennai, which will draw inspiration largely from Jain values and culture.

With 60 long sincere years in the diamond industry, Mehta has now handed over the glowing mantle to his two sons. His passion for the trade and whatever he is involved in continues unabated. For Surendrabhai Mehta, it's more than just a business, it's a way of life.

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BHAVARLAL HIRALAL JAIN STRONGLY BELIEVES THAT
'YOU SHOULD LEAVE THIS EARTH BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT'
NUMBER OF INNOVATIVE AND COST EFFECTIVE
MAKE THE FARMER'S LIFE



Born to a farming family in a tiny village, Bhavarlal Hiralal Jain studied commerce and law and went on to become a gazetted officer in the Maharashtra Civil Services. But in 1962, urged by his mother Gauribai, his entrepreneurial instincts came to the fore. With a meagre capital of Rs. 7,000 (the accumulated saving of his joint family) the only business he could contemplate was marketing and distribution. He took up a small kerosene agency and started going from door to door selling kerosene oil and domestic gas cylinders on a handcart.

So successful was he, that within a few years, he had graduated to marketing products of national and multinational corporations. He also began supplying farmers with essential items like seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, tractors and light diesel oil. He became the proud owner of a petrol pump. And then destiny intervened.

One October evening in 1973, he saw a Scottish drilling rig refuelling at his petrol pump. It carried the inscription, 'Agriculture : A profession with future'. Nostalgia flooded him. As a boy, he had seen his father and uncles cultivating the family land in Vakod village, near Jalgaon in Maharashtra (his ancestors had migrated about 100 years ago from Agolai in Rajasthan). He decided that agriculture would be his thrust area and began seeking out agencies for agricultural inputs and equipment like seeds, pesticides, fertilisers, electric motors, PVC pipes, tractors and implements.

The year was 1978 and a sick banana powder unit was being sold for Rs.30 lakh. Jain could muster only Rs.5 lakh. The bankers refused to finance the purchase of an old unit, but Jain, with his rare persuasive skill, managed to raise another 10 lakh from them. The remaining amount was provided by his suppliers and customers. Once bought, the banana powder processing unit was ingeniously converted into a papain processing plant.

HUMIPUTRA!

HE AND HIS JAIN GROUP HAVE INTRODUCED A
AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES TO
EASIER AND HIS YIELD MORE PROFITABLE

He organised groups of farmer for growing papaya and centres were created for collecting the papaya latex, the raw material for papain. Besides selling the fruit itself, the farmers now had an additional source of income in the form of the papaya latex, plus Jain had ensured a regular supply of raw material for his factory. Who could have predicted that this facility would one day become the world's largest manufacturer-exporter of papain?

On a frosty December morning in 1978, Jain landed in New York, on his first foreign trip to sell papain. Having located a hotel which he could afford (\$30 with bed and breakfast), he reached a prospective customer, Mr. Jack Haim, who immediately subjected him to a grilling. "Young man," said Haim, "give me three good reasons why I should buy your papain? I don't know you.

Haven't heard of your company. What is more, from experience I can tell you that Indians are cheats."

A lesser man might have been intimidated, but not Bhavarlal Jain. He replied staunchly, "You don't have to know me, you have to know my product. I have brought a sample which you can test and convince yourself of its quality. As for the company, you don't have to know it because the product is going to be supplied at less than five per cent of the market price to you at your doorstep without any advance payment or obligation to buy. Coming to your observation that

Indians are cheats, may I point out to you, that in effect you are saying that every sixth man walking on the face of this earth is a cheat! Every community, every country has its good and bad characters. You probably got into a wrong lane. Does that justify castigating the whole human mass of about 900 million people?"

Haim immediately apologised to Jain. Eventually the meeting ended with Haim purchasing the entire stock Jain had. Soon, Haim became Jain's number one customer.

"I am a farmer at heart. My roots will somehow and always take me to rural India," Jain believes. In 1985, so excited was he when he saw the drip irrigation system at a trade fair in Fresno, that he handed over the reins of the trading business to the rest of his family and concentrated on manufacturing drip irrigation systems in India. The foreign collaborators were

willing but not the Indian Government. The concerned bureaucrat queried, "There is no import substitution involved in your proposal because your technology saves water, but we are not importing water. Moreover, why do we need technology to distribute water?" Not disheartened by this negative response, Jain obtained the licence in 1987 and floated a public corporation, Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd. The issue was oversubscribed by over 12.5 times, an amazing feat for an unknown new entrant to the stock market.

But Jain's battle for popularising drip irrigation was far from over. The farmers proved tougher to convince than even the bureaucrats!

"We had to undertake a whole lot of extension activities including seminars, trade shows, demonstrations, ad campaigns. We had to invite farmers, administrators and leaders to personally witness the miracles a drip system could perform," Jain recalls.

In addition, study tours for about 50 progressive farmers each were organised to Israel and Australia. Similarly, board members of sugar factories and bank directors and officials were taken to the USA so they would acquire an in-depth understanding of drip technology and its various benefits. Success stories and interviews of farmers from different locations growing different crops were flashed on radio as well as TV. Reporters from all prestigious publications were taken around and requested to cover the techno-commercial aspects and future of the technology. What Jain undertook was akin to a zealous mission - door to door, village to village - to popularise drip irrigation.

As luck would have it, Jain got his biggest break from the same bureaucracy that had initially scoffed at him. In 1990, the Central and State governments boosted the subsidy programme for small land-holders and the drip irrigation system now became affordable. Sales nearly doubled and kept on increasing unabated. Bhavarlal Jain had helped raise an industry where none existed. Not surprisingly, he is hailed as a promoter/pioneer of drip irrigation in the country.

A living and lasting symbol of Bhavarlal Jain's love for the rural environment is his 1000 acre R&D farm. Amid the dusty, barren hills on the outskirts of Jalgaon, lies an oasis of neatly cultivated green fields. Painstakingly set up and supervised by him personally, the farm acts as a research, development and demonstration centre, drawing over 10,000 visitors every year from all over India, as well as abroad.

Over 150,000 horticultural and agro-forestry trees have been planted during the past four years. The farm is probably the only one of its kind in the private sector.

Jain has applied bio-technology for cloning ba-

“ I HAVE ALWAYS HELD THAT AGRICULTURE IS NOT ONLY A DEPENDABLE PARTNER, BUT IS INDEED THE VERY VEHICLE FOR OUR LONG TERM STABILITY AND PROSPERITY. MAY, OUR VERY SURVIVAL ”

nana tissues and has introduced the exotic Grand-Nain high-yielding banana variety to the Indian farmer. This is yet another measure to boost productivity by supplying improved planting material. "We cannot feed the growing Indian population by just bringing additional land under irrigation," Jain maintains. "To be competitive, we have no choice but to improve water and land use efficiency by adopting technology." His fruit and vegetable processing plants complete the value chain for the farming community and also earn valuable foreign exchange. He has also introduced solar water heating systems.

Harbinger of the second green revolution, Jain promotes, manufactures and supplies all high-tech agricultural inputs under one roof.

"India's economic development plan must be based on sustainable agriculture," he insists. "This will lead to a more stable and self-reliant growth pattern. India's core strengths are its vast land and water resources and conducive climate. Added to these are the immense and versatile human resources. If we channel our economic growth primarily based on agriculture, its related infrastructure and support this with judicious liberalisation of other areas, we will be treading a much safer path. I have always held that agriculture is not only a dependable partner, but is indeed the very vehicle for our long term stability and prosperity. Nay, our very survival."

Bhavarlal Jain's business is driven more by ideology than by profit alone. His reach extends far beyond building physical assets. A voracious reader and deep thinker, commitment to rural upliftment through meaningful assistance is his mission.

The best way to know him is through his work. His stated mission in life is: 'Leave this world better than you found it'.

All of Jain's activities are centred in the industrially backward town of Jalgaon. It is here, that Jain has made huge investments (about Rs 400 crore) in agro and export oriented industries. Forging a direct association with over 5000 families, all the focussed industries which Jain has promoted, are impacted with high social content and are in harmony with national priorities; be it agriculture, food processing, export promotion, resource conservation or environment improvement.

Built on this remarkable foundation, institutions led by him have interwoven themselves into the very fabric of the society they stand to serve. 'Jain Pipe', 'Jain Drip', 'Jain Tissue Culture' are not merely trade names or brand equity banners to generate revenues and broaden the bottom line. They have come to symbolise prosperity for small land-holders and become household

names for the agricultural community.

Bhavarlal Jain is deeply philanthropic. Keenly aware of his social responsibilities, he heads many public charitable trusts that are engaged in the medical, educational, cultural and social fields.

So proud is Jain of his Indian heritage that he sent his four sons to vernacular medium schools, when he could have so easily sent them to the best educational institutions abroad. But he wanted them to be brought up in India, imbibing Indian ethos and work culture. No wonder sons Ashok, Anil, Ajit and Atul are as much sons of the soil as their father. While Ashok is busy expanding and updating HRD, Anil is busy hoisting the Jain flag all over the world, in addition to handling the finance portfolio. Ajit looks after domestic marketing, while Atul currently based in London looks after exports to Europe.

A teetotaler and non smoker, the only vice



Bhavarlal Jain with his four sons Atul, Anil, Ajit and Ashok

Bhavarlal Jain suffers from is workaholism! And this he cannot give up, notwithstanding the five heart attacks, he's already suffered!

Jain's yearning for quality and excellence has earned his companies over 80 awards, while personally too, he is the recipient of numerous awards, national and international. The Irrigation Association of USA, that comprises over 7000 irrigation Industrial Houses around the world, bestowed the International Crawford Reid Memorial Award on Jain in 1997, 'In recognition of his significant achievements in promoting proper irrigation techniques and in fostering major advancements in the industry, outside the United States'. He is the first Indian and only the second Asian to have received this award in the past 20 years.

However, for him "the best ever reward is the smile on the face of the farmer."

THE 24 TIRTHANKARAS



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TEXT: ARATI SEN
PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHESH SHAH



A

t the age of five, Vijay Darda had decided that he wanted to be a hockey player like the legendary Dhyan Chand and bring fame and glory to his country. In the following four decades his sporting spirit remains unchanged, but the gameplan has changed. Far away from the dusty football fields of Yavatmal in north eastern Maharashtra, Darda, 51, spends most of his time in the upper house of the Parliament and at his newspaper office in Nagpur.

The son of prominent Congress leader and freedom fighter, the late Shri Jawaharlal Darda, Vijay Darda grew up in an environment charged with patriotic fervour and political debates. "My childhood memories are of my mother cooking for hordes of people ranging from simple villagers to political leaders, all of whom came to meet my father."

Jawaharlal Darda was a Congress minister in the Maharashtra Cabinet for nearly 22 years. He founded the *Lokmat* group of publications, which has today grown into a leading chain of newspapers in the state with multi-editions. Vijay Darda finds himself following in his father's footsteps, but it has happened without him consciously wanting to do so.

"I never wanted to be a politician and I never imagined I would be in the newspaper business. In my youth, my only desire was to be a sportsman. The newspaper business was a legacy and today I cannot imagine a life without *Lokmat*. And politics, you could say, is in my blood. My career as a minister is on a parallel course with my publishing career, as my priority is the welfare of the newspaper industry."

Darda's mother, Veena Devi, was against the involvement of her sons in politics. First it was Rajendra, the younger son who fought for the state assembly elections. But he withdrew from active politics after losing his candidacy. When Darda told his mother about his wish to enter politics, she was not too happy, but she suggested that if that's what he'd set his heart on, he should be a Congress candidate, since that was the party the family identified with closely.

Unfortunately for Darda, Sonia Gandhi, the Congress President, chose some other candidate over Darda for the 1998 Rajya Sabha elections.

Undeterred, he decided to fight as an independent candidate with the encouragement of friends like Rajya Sabha MP, Mukesh Patel. The summer of 1998 saw Darda snatch a spectacular victory from Congress candidate and former Union home secretary, Ram Pradhan, in a complete reversal of poll fortunes.

The election had its share of drama. The Congress accused Sharad Pawar, the former Congress leader and founder of the rebel group National-

ist Congress Party, of manipulating the defeat of Ram Pradhan by supporting Darda.

This election led to the first stirrings of political ambition in Darda and he put in a great amount of effort to woo a host of independent MLAs who were undecided between voting for the Congress or the BJP-Shiv Sena.

"I was, in a way lucky, to be caught in the crossfire between Sharad Pawar and the Congress and I got a lot of votes which I may not have got if Pawar had not supported me," says Darda.

But his campaigning skills had been tested while he was still in school, when Yavatmal colleges, which were affiliated to the Nagpur University, used Darda's skills to get Yavatmal students elected to the Student's Council.

"I was still in school when college union leaders began approaching me to help them rally for votes in Nagpur colleges."

That's because, talking to people, winning their trust is an extension of Darda's gregarious self. Even as a child, Darda never let the fact that he belonged to one of the most pre-eminent and famed families in the entire Vidarbha region, go to his head.

His father, Jawaharlal Darda was a legend in the region and his house in Yavatmal was visited by political greats like Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Indira Gandhi and a host of other leaders.

But his parents made sure that their sons had a normal upbringing. The boys went to a municipal school while their sisters studied in a convent school in Mumbai. The boys travelled in ordinary second class compartments in trains while the rest of the family went first class, and they walked to school because they did not have money to take a bus.

They received two sets of new clothes every year for Diwali. It was simplicity on the verge of austerity. "I never felt deprived because all my friends in school came from low income families. I was no different from them."

He continues, "My mother comes from a staunch Jain family and I have learnt the basic tenets of Jainism from my mother and my maternal uncle." A few years ago, Darda met a Jain *sadhvi*, Pritisudhaji at Chandrapur, near Nagpur. "I was mesmerised by her sermon. It did not seem like a religious discourse for she explained the teachings of Lord Mahavir through simple stories. I try to lead my life on the basis of *ekta akhandta, samadharma aur sambhav* (unity, secularism and peaceful co-existence)."

Darda, later, organised a huge *samskar yagna* for Pritisudhaji at Nagpur, which continued for some weeks. "It was a memorable event," remembers Darda. "Although I do not actively practice my religion, whenever there is an opportunity for spiritual enhancement I make the most of it."

He used to watch his father from a distance,

always busy talking to people, managing the press, shuttling between Delhi, Mumbai and Yavatmal. At that point, Jawaharlal Darda was more of a political leader than a father.

"I became close to him only after I joined *Lokmat*. That's when in the course of long chats, I discovered my father, his vision for his newspaper, his love for his children. He used to say political clout never lasts for long but the newspaper will remain forever. The newspaper was always his first love."

Complying with their father's wishes, the sons, Rajendra and Vijay, shifted to Mumbai from Yavatmal to study printing technology.

Darda also enrolled himself for a journalism course at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Even in his busy schedule as a newspaper baron and minister, shuttling between cities and countries, Darda finds time to pen down editorials and articles for *Lokmat*. He also has a few books to his credit including, *The Indian Emergency as seen by an Indian* and *Lokmat Congress Centenary Special-1985*.

Lokmat has come a long way from a single edition Marathi newspaper printed from a godown in Nagpur in 1971 to a publication with a circulation of 10 lakh and 18 editions that include English, Marathi and Hindi language papers. Prior to *Lokmat's* relaunch in 1971, it was a non-profit venture for Jawaharlal Darda who wanted to spread the Congress ideology through the paper and use it as a bridge between the government and the grassroots in communicating social issues and reforms.

Vijay Darda believes he has played a crucial role in changing the face of the regional newspaper industry, which belonged to the dark ages of cheap newsprint and propaganda stories. He has introduced advanced machinery in his press and was one of the first to set up a teleprinter network across rural Maharashtra. *Lokmat* has one of the largest networks of rural reporters across the country, making it a widely read regional newspaper.

Darda's involvement with the newspaper community goes much beyond *Lokmat*. He has promoted the cause of small newspapers as the President of the Indian Newspaper Society, as member of the Indian Languages Newspaper Association and of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, as life member of the Advertising Club of India, Mumbai and member of the International Advertising Association, Inc, New York.

The combined roles of businessman, newspaper baron and politician can sometimes be incestuous but Darda is very vocal about any criticism on such grounds.

"I am a trustee of *Lokmat*, not the editor, so the views and opinion of the paper are not mine. The paper is secular and promotes clean and clear journalistic reporting. So I don't carry any political baggage when I am in the *Lokmat* office neither do I play the role of a journalist when I am in the Rajya Sabha. Over there I am looking at larger issues because I believe in issue-based politics."

The reformist zeal of Darda, perhaps brought out by his political and publishing background, is manifested in his active participation in the literacy movement and in higher education. He is on the boards of several education bodies and is the founder of Amolakchand College of Science, Commerce, Arts & Law, Shri Jawaharlal Darda College of Physical Education (Sports College) and the Matoshree Veenadevi Darda English medium school at Yavatmal.

From the young lad in Yavatmal dreaming of

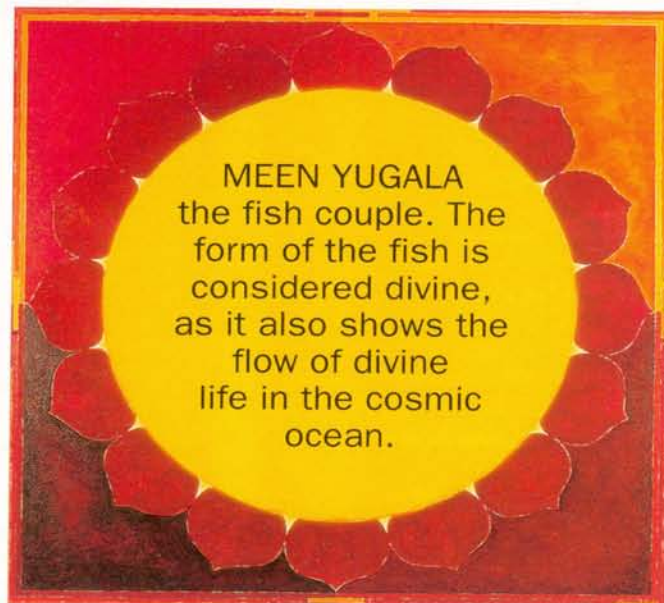


playing hockey all his life, Darda today smoothly transits from global forums to *panchayat* level committees. "I have learnt a lot from attending international conferences like the World Economic Forum which I attended with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1992, SAARC Editors' Forum in Colombo and printing technology exhibitions the world over. But I have learnt even more by mixing with people at the grassroots level, knowing their needs and problems."

The learning continues and Darda's mission is expanding - from fighting for cheaper newsprint prices and protecting the interests of small newspapers to more national issues which include safeguarding the sovereignty of the country by barring foreign equity in media.

"I am a survivor, a long distance runner. And I feel as if the marathon has just begun," he concludes.

ASHTA MANGALA-MEEN YUGALA



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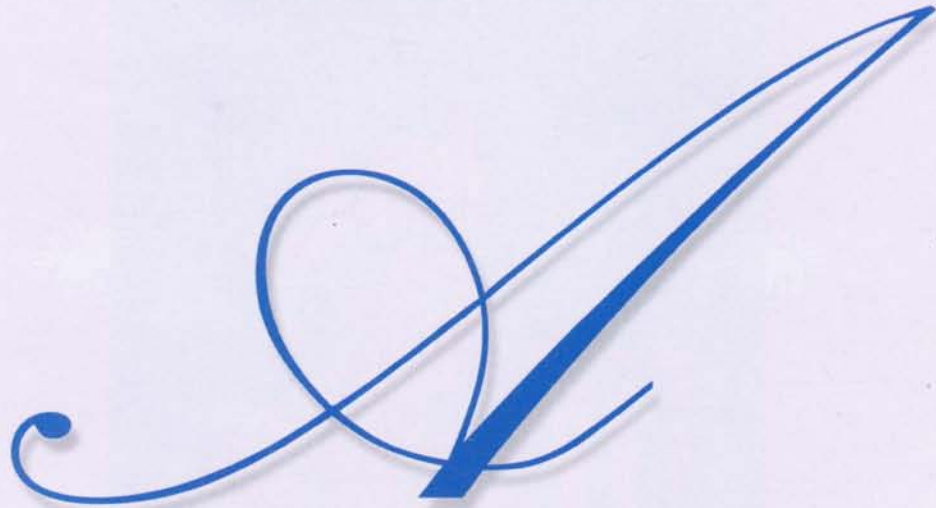
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TORRENT OF GOOD WILL

In the aftermath of the killer quake that struck Gujarat, the Mehta family of the Torrent Group, Ahmedabad, were at the forefront in distributing medicine and aid to the needy. But then for mother Sharadaben and sons Sudhir and Samir Mehta, *dharma* has always meant doing good for as many as possible!

TEXT: SANDHYA BORDEWEKAR

8.45 am, Friday, 26th January 2001, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The Mehta family had woken up to a day of leisure, of no meetings, no appointments, and no decisions. It was Republic Day, a national holiday, and a long, much looked forward to weekend stretched ahead. It was one of those rare occasions which the large Mehta family had decided to spend together.

8.50 am. Shardaben Mehta had just finished her morning chores and was planning to go to the *derasar* opposite their home. Sons Sudhir and Samir, Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Torrent Group, one of the fastest growing industrial conglomerates in the country were up but not really about.

"I was in my balcony, having tea and leafing through the newspapers when I thought I felt a

little unsteady," says Sudhirbhai, as he recalls the 20 seconds that shook Ahmedabad, brought Kutch to its knees, and pulled the rug from under Gujarat's feet. "My first thought was that my BP had shot up and I was having an attack of vertigo myself. But when I heard my teacup rattling in the saucer, I knew immediately that this was an earthquake. Fortunately, all us, my mother, my wife, my brother and his wife and the children were at home so we rushed out of the house into the garden. Then the lights and the telephones crashed."

By 9.20 am, Samir Mehta with his technical staff was already at the Sabarmati power station of the Ahmedabad Electricity Company, in which Torrent has a controlling stake, to try and restore the power supply. Within one-and-a-half-hours, Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad city could switch on electricity.

"For the first 3-4 hours, everyone was talking about Ahmedabad. What has collapsed and where, getting the injured to hospital, organising relief," explains Sudhirbhai. "We had already opened the manufacturing units and got together antibiotics, painkillers and stress management drugs since those were the medicines most needed to cope with such an emergency, and set up a distribution network with local NGOs. Then we came to know about Kutch. So instead of just giving away the medicines haphazardly, we prepared standard packets for distribution so that all those who needed the medicines had access to the right drugs in the right quantity."

Within two weeks of the earthquake, the Torrent Group had already distributed more than Rs. 50 lakh worth of essential medicines through 20-25 NGOs actually working in the affected areas. "We are also working with a very committed and wonderful group of doctors, most of whom we know very well since we are in the pharmaceutical business," says Sudhirbhai, "and together we have started a small hospital in Bhachau, one of the badly affected towns. The hospital is financed by the U N Mehta Charitable Trust. Amongst our long-term plan is a hospital in Bhuj that is already at

a conceptual stage."

Having learnt their elementary business lessons in the pharmaceutical industry, the Torrent Group's philanthropic leanings are primarily towards healthcare and the electricity sector.

Father Uttambhai Mehta started his career as a medical representative with Sandoz Ltd. As a young boy growing up the hard way in Chhapi, a small village in the backward Banaskantha district in north Gujarat, he finished school at the nearby Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya on loan scholarships. His decision to leave Sandoz must have been a gut-wrenching one, especially when the small pharmaceutical business, Trinity Laboratories, he had established with his severance pay in 1959, did not do too well and he had to return to Chhapi village in failing health. However, wife Shardaben continued to manage the business from their village. Uttambhai never really regained his lost health but his extraordinary will power and Shardaben's meticulous care saw him through the difficult times as he carefully laid every brick of an edifice that was worth Rs. 2200 crore at the time of his death in March 1998 at the age of 76.

"My biggest worry then was how to keep the family together," remembers Shardaben, a shadow passing over her face. It must have been difficult, if not impossible, to bring up a family of four young children, look after a husband in indifferent health, and continue managing the pharmaceutical business where she would herself package the medicines, deal with the distributing agencies, make bills and collect the outstandings. "I had complete faith in Lord Jai Jinendra," she says simply. The same lady who today has access to a considerable

fortune, could hardly look beyond Rs. 200, those days.

Having gone through difficult years herself, she has tremendous empathy for those less fortunate.

"My mother is a completely God-fearing person," says Sudhirbhai. "In 1984 when we decided to export to Russia and the Eastern Bloc countries, I was continuously travelling to these countries. My mother made me promise that in keep-



Late Uttambhai Mehta



Shardaben Mehta



The U. N. Mehta Institute of Cardiology & Research Centre, Ahmedabad

ing with the tenets of our Jain faith I would not eat non-vegetarian food or touch alcohol. She would pack lots of *khakhra*s for me, so that I wouldn't go hungry," he laughs. A promise which he has strictly kept, not just out of respect for his mother, but also because he believes in it himself. Those were the days when vegetarianism had yet to catch Western fancy. "My hosts would often laugh at me and frankly they were quite worried that I may fall ill if I didn't eat properly or at least drink some vodka in the bitter cold. But I managed quite well."

Reminisces Shardaben, "My husband always believed in straightforward dealings in business. He also believed in sharing one's prosperity. The moment our business began to do well in the early 1970s (Trinity Laboratories became Torrent Pharmaceuticals Ltd. In 1975), his first thought was to do something for his old school and he decided to help establish more such hostel-schools so that children from poor families could get the chance to study. He went to the community and convinced them that similar schools for girls should also be established. So we helped set up the first Mahavir Jain Kanya Chatralaya. My children studied at the small village high school in Chhapi and it became my dream to modernise the school and provide it with a proper infrastructure. So we have now completely rebuilt it and there are 1200 students studying there right upto Class XII," she says with a smile.

"But that's not all," adds her son, "we plan to

expand the school so it can accommodate 300 more students." Shardaben is helped in her several charitable projects by her eldest daughter, Meeṇa Modi whose husband, Dineshbhai manages the Rs 100 crore Torrent Cables. Her other daughter, Nayana Shah and her husband, Dushyantbhai manage Torrel Cosmetics Pvt. Ltd. The family manages one major trust - the U. N. Mehta Charitable Trust that was established in 1982. "My basic concern revolves around empowering women and children through education and vocational skills so that they can become independent," says Shardaben. "And the second is health care. Both concern humanity, rich or poor, young or old. Though my husband and I have always followed the Jaina *dharma* in our personal life and supported *sahadharmik bhakti* (helping our own community), we later wondered why were restricting ourselves. We decided to help all those who needed our help, and also to do something for the village which had supported and nurtured us in our difficult days and do something for the people there? That's when my husband decided to contribute about 10 per cent of whatever profit we earned to society and formed the U.N. Mehta Charitable Trust, to fulfil this aim."

"Talking about Jaina *dharma*," continues Shardaben animatedly, "let me tell you how my husband interpreted it. He always advised our children that whatever they did, they must make sure that they were always on the side of truth.

That was the essence of his *dharma*. Neither of us forced our children to follow any rituals blindly. We always told our children that it is good to follow what religion has to say, that it is good to visit the *derasar* regularly. But this is not enough to be a good Jain. The most important thing is not to hurt people. Violence of any kind — physical, mental or spiritual — must be avoided.”

In keeping with the Jain philosophy of *jeeva-daya*, at the behest of Shardaben, the Torrent Group has contributed phenomenally in arranging for cattle fodder in as many villages of the state as it could reach during the drought-declared years. Once on a visit to the famous Jain temples of Palitana, Uttambhai realised that pilgrims suffered greatly due to lack of potable water at some of the important temples on the hilltop. The water from the *kund* was quite unclean and the staunch Jain pilgrims would not touch mineral water. So Torrent stepped into the picture and worked out a scheme by which demineralised water could be piped up at least upto the main temples.

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“It took us three years to finally put the plan into action, but we finally did it,” says Sudhirbhai.

Torrent began to work in the fields of neuropsychiatry and cardiovascular medications, and as stress-related disorders began to become more and more frequent in the 1980s and 90s, there was an increasing need for specialised hospitals to treat and care for patients suffering from these problems. As these so called ‘rich men’s problems’ began to take their toll on the common man, Uttambhai Mehta was convinced that Ahmedabad seriously needed a good, state-of-the-art cardiac institute.

“Since the state already had good hospitals for specialised treatment of cancer and kidney diseases, my father contacted Dr. Girinath and Dr. Mathew of Apollo Hospital, Chennai, to discuss the possibility of starting a cardiac hospital in Ahmedabad,” explains Sudhirbhai. And that’s how the U. N. Mehta Institute of Cardiology and Research Centre came up in Ahmedabad in association with the Government of Gujarat. “This



Parimal Garden, Ahmedabad

is also a teaching institute, so cardiologists are also trained here," smiles Sudhirbhai.

The hospital charges patients on a fee-slab system that is directly proportional to their earnings. A lot of the poor and really deserving patients are treated free-of-charge, in the sense that the hospital looks for donors to foot their bills. Sudhirbhai is presently trying to set up a large corpus fund in association with the state government, which would generate enough interest to take care of the poor patients so as to solve this problem once and for all.

The Torrent Group has also initiated an informal programme where highly skilled cardiac surgeons from the US (often NRIs originally from Ahmedabad) come to the hospital with their entire medical teams for a specified period each year and offer their services free. That's how they got an eminent team of NRI doctors from California to come and perform 30-40 minimum invasive cardiac surgeries, the latest in cardiac techniques, for the first time in Ahmedabad last year. Torrent is also thinking of setting up a good general hospital in Banaskantha, their home district. "I feel very happy that my husband chose a field of business, where we could help alleviate people's physical pain and misery, and now my

sons are following in his footsteps," says Shardaben. "But I am concerned about the environment too. This huge Parimal Garden right in the middle of Ahmedabad city was so unkempt. My husband would regularly go for his morning walk there. And we both felt sad that such a lovely property was wasted. So my husband decided to do something about it."

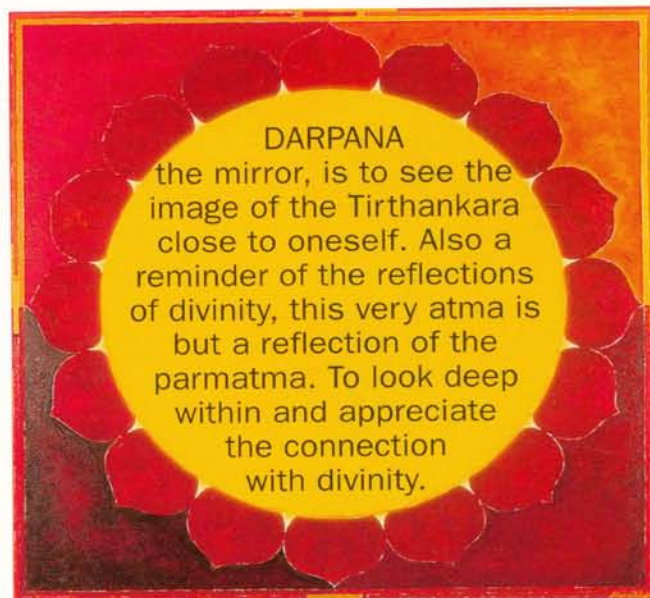
The Torrent Group took over the development and beautification of Parimal Garden, with architect Kamal Mangaldas creating some truly imaginative landscaping, with spaces for senior citizens, picnic spots for families, jogging tracks, children's play areas, water bodies with fountains. It's a green oasis in the heart of the city.

"Our Parimal project convinced us that we must take up 'green activity' in a major way," explains Sudhirbhai. "At our Torrent Research Centre just outside Ahmedabad, we have actually put a green building together. The huge ultra-modern complex incorporates several energy-efficient and passive cooling principles that keep the inside temperature of the building a comfortable 30 degrees C. without air conditioning even during the scorching Ahmedabad summers. Isn't this what good health is all about? Not just for ourselves but for our planet too?"



Standing (l to r): Sudhir, Anita, Sapna and Samir
Sitting (l to r): Uttambhai, Shardaben, Shaan, Jinal, Aman and Varun

ASHTA MANGALA-DARPANA





Weddings on earth, blessed in heaven

A Jain wedding is solemnised in the presence of God, but without a priest officiating!

TEXT: SHRUTI PANDIT

Iain marriages do not have traditional Brahmins performing the marriages. It is a marriage performed in the presence of God. According to Jain experts, the Jain *vidhi* has its own origin in the philosophy of Jainism, where all living organisms are respected and granted their own freedom of expression. Therefore, the ritual of marriage too follows the philosophy of Jainism and adheres to the rules set by Bhagwan Mahavir.

Brahmins do not perform the wedding. Close relations of the bride and the groom step in for the *mantrochhar*. Earlier the parents performed the rites and also said the mantras. But these days, they just perform the rites and other relatives and friends of the family recite the mantras.

The Jain *vidhi* is very meticulous. The scriptures that accompany the wedding invitation have a detailed description of every ritual. The marriage *mandap* itself has to be set to exact specifications in order to invoke positive energies and keep away the negative ones. The scriptures define that the bride and bridegroom

should sit facing the east and the parents should face either the east or north while performing the rites. The person giving instructions and reciting the mantras should occupy a position from where everyone can hear and understand him clearly.

The scriptures also have a detailed list of what is required for the *vidhi*. The most important is an idol of Bhagwan Mahavir (it has to be from a temple). Temple priests allow a family to borrow the idol from the temple for the duration of the *vidhi*.

Also essential are the scriptures or any religious book that contains *samayik*, *panch*



pratikraman, etc. along with a *thavani* (special wooden stand to keep the scripture) and a red silk cloth. A *siddhachakrayantra* or an *ashta mangala* is deemed necessary. *Siddhachakrayantra puja* or *Padmavati puja* is optional, and the former usually takes place if either of the families have taken a *mannat* before God when the wedding was finalised.

Since this is the beginning of a new life for the couple, a *kalash*, big pot covered with red cloth symbolising the complete life is kept at the centre. Betel leaves and silver coins are placed in the *kalash*.

There is no *hom-havan*. Jain philosophy does not permit burning of wood as this might hurt or kill the living organisms that might be living inside. Instead, there is a closed lamp symbolising the presence of the Fire God.

It is essential that everyone present make an offering to God. All the offerings are placed in the centre so that the bridal couple can perform the *mangal pheras* easily.

The *vidhi* starts with a welcome benediction. This is followed by salutations to the Arihantas (the establishers of the *shasan*), the Siddhas (liberated souls), the Acharyas (spiritual masters), Upadhyayas (scholars) and all the sadhus of the world who have dedicated their lives to God.

The bride and the groom then light the *mangal deep* (the auspicious lamp) and pray for God's grace to lighten up their new life. Now the bride's mother and groom's mother put auspicious *tilaks* on the couple's forehead. A senior woman of the family ties the *mindhal* on the right hand of the bride and the groom. Another ties the holy *rakshapotali* on the right arm of both the parents. This is followed by the recitation of the *mangal tilak* verses. Sacred rice is offered at the feet of Arihant.

The *Arhat puja* follows, where all 24 Tirathankaras are worshipped. The bride and groom offer *vasakshepa* (sacred yellow coloured sandalwood powder) to each Tirthankara. One senior woman of the family sprinkles sacred water on the couple. Then comes the *gyana puja* (worship of the sacred scriptures and the books of learning), where the couple performs the ceremony by offering *vasakshepa*. The recital of *shanti* mantra along with offering of *akshata* (sacred rice) follows.

The actual wedding ceremony begins now. The tying of wedding knots, *cheedabandhan* is the main ritual. One of the women of the family ties



आज की ताजा चाय

Adsun

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one end of the bride's sari to the end of the loose cloth that hangs from the groom's right shoulder. This end has betel nut and silver coins tied to it. Another woman then places a *varmala* (garland symbolising union) around the couple's neck. This is symbolic of their partnership in the performance of duties. This union has been formed in the presence of the five Gods and the light.

Now follows the core of the sacrament of the wedding – the *hastamilap* (joining the palms of the bride and the groom together, symbolising their union). The bride's father draws the holy *swastika* on the couples's

palms and then places the bride's right palm on the groom's right palm, keeping Lord Jineshwara as witness. Bride and groom then recite the Navkar mantra thrice in their mind and do the *kumbhaka dhyana* (meditation) taking deep breaths. The bride's parents pour holy water on the joined palms of the bridal couple reciting *Om Arham*.

Chanting of the *mangalashtak*, is the next step. Keeping Lord Jineshwar as witness, everyone prays that the newly wed couple enjoys harmony, love, peace and happiness at every moment in their life. These *manglashtaks* are sometimes from the old Sanskrit scriptures. Or sometimes a family member writes them especially for the occasion weaving in the names of bride and groom and their family members.

Now comes the holy ceremony of offering unbroken scared rice to Lord Jineshwar or Bhagwan Mahavir. The newly wed couple offers this at the feet of the idol to the chanting of the Navkar mantra.

It is now time for the *mangal pheras* around the lamp. The bride leads and the groom follows her during the *phas*. Each *phera* ends with both of them offering sacred rice at the feet of the Lord and saying *Om Arham*. The mantras that are chanted during the *phas* are salutations to Lord Arihant and his supremacy in different forms. After the *phas* is the *saptapadi* - the seven vows that bind the

couple for their lifetime. After taking six *phas*, the bride changes her place to sit on the groom's left. She is now the daughter-in-law of the groom's family. Blowing of conches and ringing of bells mark this occasion. The seventh *phera* happens now, with the groom taking the lead and the bride following. They recite *Om punyam, priyantam, priyantam*, thrice. The mantras that are chanted after this by the parents mean- noble birth, good house, divinity, sovereignty, the qualities of Arihant and salvation.

The last ritual takes place as the groom places the *mangalsutra* around bride's neck and applies *sindoor* to her forehead. Everybody present now thanks the Lord for being present to bless the couple. They also ask for forgiveness for mistakes committed unknowingly.

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