

December 2016

JainDigest



A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America

MUSLIMS CELEBRATE EID



Maslenitsa - Festival of Forgiveness for Russians



Judaism

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DIC. 8, 2015 - NOV. 20, 2016



WILL BE A HOLY YEAR OF MERCY
- POPE FRANCIS



Ubuntu-arts-festival

Forgiveness - A Virtue Every Religion Celebrates



JainDigest

A Publication of the

Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)

JAINA is an umbrella organization of local Jain Associations in U.S.A. and Canada. The purpose of the organization is to preserve, practice, and promote Jain Dharma and Jain Way of life.

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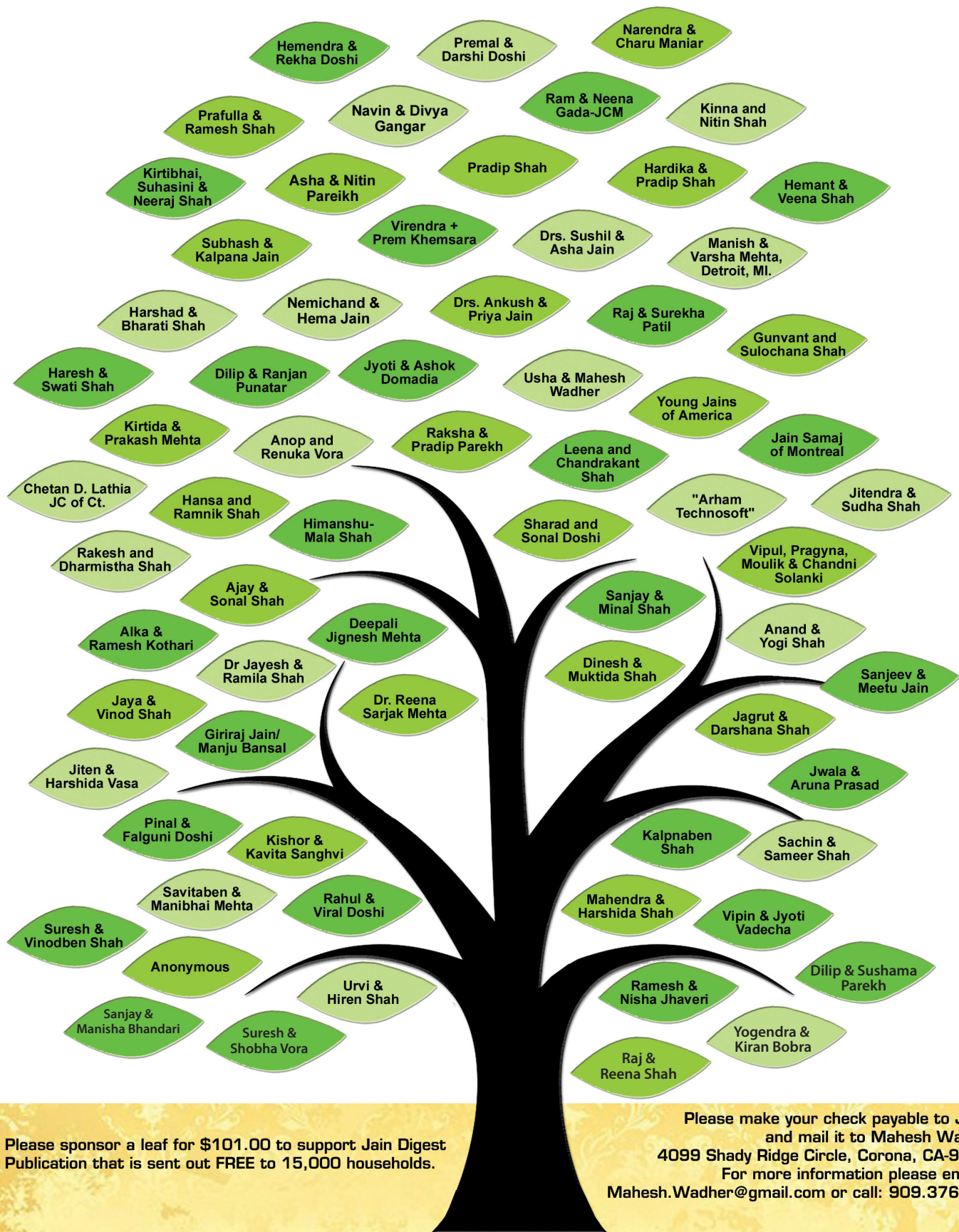
On the Cover:
Forgiveness: A Virtue Every Religion
Celebrates

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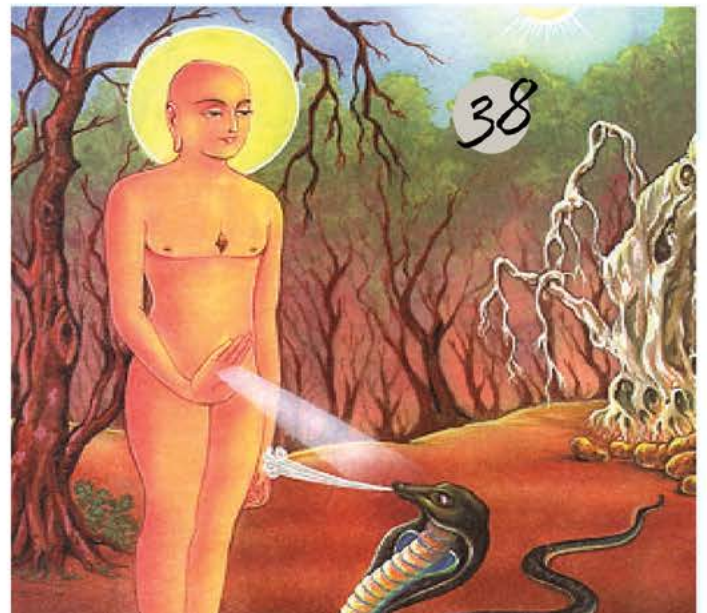
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Om Shri Veetragey Namah
Jai Jinendra,

*Wish you all a happy, prosperous,
healthy & peaceful 2017!*

Time goes so fast! It was last October when we were anxiously putting together the Jain Digest team and deciding on the content of the December 2015 issue. And here we are, a year later, ready to

publish our fourth issue. It has been a humbling and amazing experience. With the blessings of Bhagwan, the support we have received from the JAINA Executive Committee, commitment of our various writers & editors, and your heartfelt compliments have been instrumental in bringing this magazine to you. Your love and support is very much appreciated.

As you may have guessed from the cover, the theme of this issue of the magazine is Forgiveness. As soon as we announced this theme among our editorial staff and advisors, there was a very enthusiastic response. Within a very short time we had agreed on the varied topics under this theme and had assigned the authors. It was a very rewarding experience for our authors and editors to work on these articles. Some required out of the box thinking, introspection and a lot of research. My sincere thanks to all of them and to our Art and Design team.

This series of articles starts with "Power of Forgiveness" which lists many benefits of forgiveness and also shows how it has been used by many to manifest real changes in people and their circumstances. "Forgiveness of Bhagwan Mahavir" provides insight in to the Jain principles behind His ability to forgive. The next two articles explore the importance of forgiveness in the major religions of the world and how they all incorporate celebration of forgiveness in their religious festivities.

Even though we want to be able to forgive, there are some challenges we face. Read how to overcome those in "Challenges in Practicing Forgiveness" and also get some tips from Pujya Samani Suyashnidhiji's article. Finally, we bring you some stories of nations, communities and amazing individuals that showed extraordinary capacity to forgive in the most challenging and trying circumstances.

Our sincere hope is that you all get a glimpse in to the various aspects of forgiveness and contemplate on this very essential virtue that resonates with all the people and brings out the divinity in us.

In addition, we introduce you to the beautiful 2017 JAINA Calendar, provide a peek in to the 2017 JAINA Convention, and report on the successful 2016 JYEP program & G2G Conference. As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

Please e-mail your comments and suggestions to us at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com.

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh

Jai Jinendra,

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

We just had the two most important festivals for the Jains. The Paryushan or Das Laxana & Diwali. Diwali was celebrated to commemorate the Nirvana of Lord Mahavira and at the conclusion of Paryushana or Das Laxana, followers request forgiveness from others for any offenses committed during the year. Keeping this festivity in mind, Jain Digest committee decided to dedicate this publication to the theme of forgiveness. We appreciate all the authors who put their valuable time and efforts in providing us the articles.

We had received excellent comments on our previous publications and sincerely appreciate everyone for the same. The selfless services provided by our editing and graphics team is worth a salute.

Jain Digest committee is very much thankful to the donors without whose support it would just not be possible to continue publishing such a wonderful and a meaningful magazine with contents that elevates and connects Jains in North America.

Many of the Jain Digest team members also had an opportunity to put together the 2017 JAINA Calendar. It contains 12 beautiful pictures of antique JAIN paintings with detailed explanation. This treasure will be something unique and a great collection in every home. You can read more about the source of these paintings and how the calendar was put together on the back cover of the calendar. I very much hope that you will enjoy this calendar.

It would be very helpful to get your feedback on the contents of this publication as well as on the 2017 JAINA calendar.

On behalf of Jain Digest Committee I ask for forgiveness if we have missed or misrepresented any information while presenting any of the material to the best of our knowledge.

If you are interested in sharing your talents as a writer, editor or graphics designer, you can join our magazine and calendar teams. Please let us know of your interests via e-mail at Jaindigestpublication@gmail.com or Jainacalendar@jaina.org

Thank you with warm regards,

Mahesh Wadher



JAINA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Jai Jinendra!

On behalf of JAINA Executive Committee (EC) and JAINA Board of Directors (BOD), I wish you and your family happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. May this festive season bring peace and prosperity in your life.

It is my privilege to share with you a number of accomplishments JAINA has attained over this year. With your continuous support, we are progressing in achieving our vision to evolve and promote Jain practices, educate Jains and non-Jains to spread the message of Bhagwan Mahavir around the globe.



JAINA President's address at White House

Here are some highlights:

JAINA and White House Create History

For the first time in history of White House and JAINA, an exclusive JAINA event was held in White House on October 7, 2016. 70 member delegation of JAINA along with Acharya Chandanaji, Sadhvi Sanghmitraji and Sadhvi Sahejaji visited White House. As your JAINA President, I delivered a speech on "World Peace through Non-violence", which was the theme of the conference.

JAINA Event at Capitol Hill

200 Jains from all over USA and Canada joined in a procession in the Capitol Hill hallway, singing and dancing. We conducted Padmavati Devi Pujan also and JAINA presented a shawl and a Jain memento to Senator Richard Black from Virginia. Everyone enjoyed Ras-Garba on Capitol Hill.



Pujan on Capitol Hill



JAINA Delegation at White House

Youth Exchange Program

12 youths from across India participated in a youth exchange program in a collaboration effort between JAINA and Jain International Trade Organization (JITO). Youths had an opportunity to meet Jain Leaders, business leaders, and visit leading enterprises. JAINA would like to send a delegation of Youths from North America to India in near future. Please encourage your youths to participate.

Welcome to Austin and Indiana to JAINA

JAINA extended warm welcome to our new Members - Jain Center Of Central Indiana and Jain Sangh of Greater Austin

Digest

99 Yatra

JAINA has organized an auspicious 99 Yatra to Shatrunjay Mahatirth, Palitana. Yatra has commenced in India on November 14, 2016 and shall end on January 13, 2017.

Paryushan and Das Lakshana Parva

JAINA published Daily Religious Newsletter during 18 days of Paryushan and Das Lakshana. JAINA acknowledged all Tapasvis of various Jain Centers during Paryushan and Das Lakshana 2016 celebrations by publishing their names in Newsletter and at www.jaina.org.

JAINA BOD Meetings

JAINA hosted BOD Meetings in Dallas in April 2016 with 50 attendees & New Jersey, in October 2016 with 70 attendees.

Entrepreneurs Conference

JAINA collaborated with Jain International Trade Organization (JITO) to present 'G2G Going Global', a unique International Business and Networking Conference. The conference was dedicated towards fostering entrepreneurship and providing opportunities for global networking to the Jain Community.



JAINA & JITO G2G Going Global Conference

Jain Centers Event Schedule

JAINA rolled out Master Schedule of events at various Jain Centers at www.jaina.org. It can help you to decide if you wish to attend any event at local Jain center when you travelling to another city. This is continuously being updated also.

JAINA Digital Presence

JAINA website, www.jaina.org has been revamped and is updated on a weekly basis. It has now Religious Videos, Basic information on our Tirthankars and much more. JAINA is publishing Weekly Newsletters and it has received overwhelming response from the community. Today, JAINA is found everywhere from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to You Tube and recently also JAINA has an active blog too.

JAINA TV Channel: JAINA EC is working on a 24x7 JAINA smart TV Channel where you will be able to watch religious programs anytime.

Tax Deductible Donation to JAINA

In order to meet our mission and provide services to the community, JAINA relies on community members for their valuable support. Please make your end of year tax deductible donation at www.jaina.org. All Donors names are published in Weekly Newsletter and JAINA website.

Looking ahead, 2017 promises to bring Jains together globally and spread the message of Ahimsa, tolerance, compassion, and charity.

Thank you for your consistent support to make JAINA better each day. Together, we will continue to deliver on our shared vision to evolve and promote Jain way of living, educate Jains and non-Jains to create a strong North American Jain community.

Sincerely,

Ashok Domadia

Ashok Domadia

JAINA- President

Chairman-BOD



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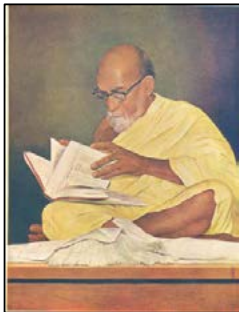
We are serving our community with
authentic Indian cuisine for over 25 years





Under the leadership of Rajeev Pandya, the JAINA Calendar and Mini Library committee has been bringing you the annual JAINA Calendar since year 2000. Each year they have brought us wonderful pictures of Jain temples around the world. The calendar has elevated the image of JAINA as an institution working to preserve and promote the Jain heritage and ancient culture in the Western world.

In continuing with that tradition of promoting cultural heritage, we bring to you the 2017 calendar with 12 amazing pictures of ancient Jain Art collection from the esteemed Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology (LDII) in Ahmedabad, India. The pictures include pattas (paintings) of intriguing Yantras, legendary Teerths and astonishing events depicting various aspects of the Jain beliefs and history.



What is special about these pattas is the fact that they are from an antique collection of Muni Shri Punyavijayji. Muni Shri had collected over 10,000 manuscripts and 7,000 rare books. He had made it his life's mission to ensure that the priceless heritage of manuscripts was properly preserved, studied and made available to the scholars and layman alike. With help from Sheth Kasturbhai Lalbhai, the LD Institute was established in 1956 which currently houses these artifacts, sculptures, paintings, wood carvings, drawings, miniature paintings, woodwork, ancient & contemporary coins and bead work. The institution today has over 75,000 rare manuscripts. Many manuscripts are written on palm leaves, Birch-bark (Bhojpatra) and handmade paper. Some of the manuscripts are written in gold or silver ink and full of multicolor miniatures.

Most of the painting or pattas are from early mogul era; the oldest one being from 1433. The pattas vary in size; some are 2' x 2' and some are as large as 8' x 8'. These Pattas are created with vegetable die and have decorative borders. Some of these pattas, besides being religiously significant, are also of historic importance. They are carefully stored in bank like vaults and only made available to serious scholars and researchers. Pattas are preserved in individual wooden boxes with medicinal pouches. These pattas are inspected and pouches are replaced every 6 months.

We feel very fortunate and are grateful to Dr. Jitendra Shah of LD Institute who made these pattas available to us to photograph and print for the JAINA calendar. He also provided us with detailed description of these pattas.



In addition to the pattas, we are also bringing you short biographies of 12 Jain Acharyas along with paintings based on the events in the Archaya's life. These paintings were created by a renowned painter in Ahmedabad especially for the calendar.

Each month, you will also see various Jain Stutis and an enchanting picture of a Jain temple.

We certainly hope you enjoy this 2017 JAINA calendar. We would love to get your feedback. Please write to us at: jainacalendar@jaina.org



Power of Forgiveness

By Dr. Sulekh C. Jain



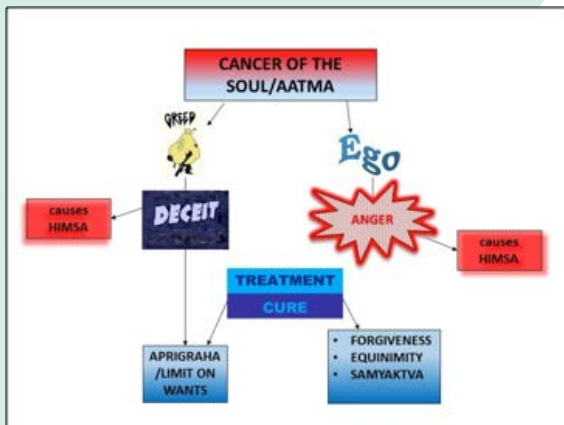
Jain



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

Forgiveness or Kshama is the intentional and voluntary process by which a victim undergoes a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense, it lets go of negative emotions such as vengefulness, with an increased ability to wish the offender well. Forgiveness has two aspects; one - abuser to ask for forgiveness from those who have been hurt and second - abused to grant forgiveness to the abuser. To grant genuine forgiveness, it is essential that the forgiver must first get rid of his anger and hurt. Similarly, the person who caused the hurt must first control or subdue his ego. Then only the real and lasting forgiveness will result.

As a psychological concept and virtue, the benefits of forgiveness have been explored by other religions, social sciences and medicine. Many research studies have shown that people who were neurotic, angry and hostile in life were less likely to forgive another person, even after a long time had passed. Specifically, these people were more likely to avoid their transgressor and preserve the desire to enact revenge upon them. Studies also show that people who forgive are happier and healthier than those who hold resentments. One study showed that forgiveness improves physical health and discovered that when people think about forgiving an offender, it leads to improved functioning of cardiovascular and nervous systems. Studies at the University of Wisconsin and others found that; the more forgiving the people were, the less they suffered from a wide range of illnesses, showed a reduction in experience of stress, and an increase in vitality. The less forgiving people reported a greater number of health problems. Studies at Stanford and other universities point out that forgiveness is not only powerful, but also excellent for your health. Forgiving people become less angry, feel less hurt, more optimistic, become more tolerant in a variety of situations, and become more compassionate and self-confident.



“Holding a grudge is like letting someone live rent-free in your head.”

“Forgiveness is the key to opening the door leading to salvation—freedom from being controlled by the past, freedom from the emotional ties to the offender, freedom from the continual inner conflicts of hate and bitterness, freedom to realize your true potential and enjoy the fullness of life”. (From a recent flier from Jain Society of Greater Detroit.)

“Confession of our error is like a broom that sweeps away the dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before.” Mahatma Gandhi

Jesus Christ exemplified forgiveness on the Cross. Bhagwan Mahavir taught us forgiveness. Lord Buddha taught us compassion. In our daily lives, we read and see many stories in news, literature, history, Jain and other religious texts about the power of forgiveness. Genuine forgiveness by the forgiver and the forgiven is like a surgery that heals the emotional and physical hurt caused by ego, anger, deceit and greed. It also results in peace, tranquility, harmony, friendship, cooperation and interdependence on each other. Both the forgiven and the forgiver benefit.

Below are some examples of how practice of forgiveness is a win-win situation for all.

- ❖ The following story of “The Bishop’s Candlesticks” from “Les Miserables” by Victor Hugo is very moving and touching. Jean Valjean is released from prison after serving 19 years as a galley slave, a very torturous inhuman punishment. His misery did not end with his release. He was issued a yellow passport which branded him as a dangerous criminal. He was denied food and shelter. All inns and hotels turned him out, in spite of the fact that he wanted to pay for the services. He had no place to go. When he had lost all hope, he was directed to go to Bishop Myriel’s house. This bishop was known for his good-heartedness, and charity, his empathy and love for the poor.

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Jean Valjean knocked at the door of the Bishop late in the evening, hungry, tired, dirty and devoid of all hope. He was surprised when the Bishop received him like an honored guest and treated him with dignity. The Bishop told him “You need not tell me who you are. This is not my house; it is the house of Christ! You are suffering. You are hungry and thirsty. Be welcome”. Jean Valjean was stunned. For the first time in his life he was treated like a human being. The Bishop made him sit with him for dinner on a well laid table. This was the first time in 19 years that Jean was served a decent meal. The food was served in silver plates, and the table was lit with candles in silver candlesticks. The silver plates and the silver candlesticks were the only valuables which the Bishop owned. Jean was also given a decent bed, next to the Bishop’s bed for his night’s rest. From wooden planks to a clean comfortable bed after 19 years!

But the hardened criminal within him made him restless. He decamped with the silver plates in the night. Jean was caught with the silver plates and brought to Bishop Myriel. The Bishop asked the police to release him and stated that the plates were not stolen, but gifted by him to Jean! Bishop then handed over the candlesticks also to Jean!

This completely changed the life of Jean Valjean. Several years later, Valjean fulfilled his promise to Monsieur Myriel and became a changed man under the alias Monsieur Madeleine in the city of Montreuil-sur-Mer. After a few years in the city, he was elected mayor and revolutionized the city’s economy, building many factories and creating many jobs. He became a very famous, influential, popular, and charitable man.

- ❖ Sir Prabhaskar Pattani was the Diwan of the erstwhile state of Bhavnagar. His jewelry was stolen. The culprit, a servant in his house was brought to him by the police. Pattani Saheb got the servant released and also gave him financial help. The servant returned the jewelry and took a vow to lead an honest life.
- ❖ In 1992, the then incumbent President George Bush(senior) and Bill Clinton fought very, nasty, bitter and acrimonious election but after the election they both forgave each other and as a result they became very good friends all the last 24 years resulting in inter-dependence and respect and mutual cooperation between both of them.
- ❖ During the Second World War, Hitler and his Nazi Army occupied France for several years but immediately after the war, France (the oppressed) forgave Germany resulting in unparalleled Peace, Progress and prosperity all these past 70 years.



Forgiveness is an important aspect in any marriage. When two individuals are able to forgive each other, it results to a long, happy marriage. The way you argue with your spouse could be tied to your health woes. New research from the University of California, Berkeley says spouses (especially husbands) who rage with anger during a fight are more likely to develop cardiovascular problems or high blood pressure. Those who stonewall, shutting down emotionally, were more likely to develop muscular issues, such as pain in the back or neck.

One day a young couple started arguing and fighting over something. During the argument, the wife got extremely angry and she threw her mobile phone at her husband. The husband in a spirit of coolness and forgiving mood grabbed the incoming phone and put it in his pocket. The wife was expecting some strong reaction from her husband, but it did not happen. After a few minutes, the wife cooled down and asked her husband, “What kind of man are you? I hit you with a cell phone, but there was no reaction.” To this, the husband replied “Madam, I thought the incoming calls are free.” Hearing this, they both had a big laugh, all was forgotten, and things returned to normal.

What a great example of using non-violent language to resolve conflicts! These are the instances of true forgiveness, true compassion, and true charity. May these help us learn to be better human beings.

Forgiveness is the Wonderful Smell that a Flower gives when it is being Crushed!



Forgiveness in Bhagwan Mahavir

By Anop R. Vora, Rochester, NY



Jain



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

After taking diksha, Bhagwan Mahavir spent most of his time in deep meditation. Even the king of heavenly gods, Indra, praised the Lord saying that no god, devil or man can disturb Mahavir during his meditation. Hearing this, Sangam dev, who was very proud of his strength, decided to prove Indra wrong. He arrived at the temple where the Lord was meditating. He created a dust storm so that the Lord could not breathe properly. He created various creatures that attacked the Lord's body from all sides. But Mahavir was not disturbed. Sangam then lit a fire between Mahavir's legs and cooked food on the fire. One after another, he created 20 such atrocities in one night, but Mahavir stayed peaceful and calm, deeply engrossed in meditation. Sangam continued to try various such mayhems for six months. He did not allow Mahavir to have any food or even a drop of water during this time. Finally, he gave up and apologized to Mahavir.

Many of us might have heard this story often but did we ever ask ourselves how we would have reacted if we were placed in a similar situation? Would we have been able to stay calm? Most of us are disturbed even if a mosquito just creates a buzz near our ear while we are meditating! What was it in Bhagwan Mahavir that kept him undisturbed? This is what the Lord told Sangam after he apologized. "Sangam, none of your acts made me suffer. Since I have willingly taken up this journey towards Moksh, my full attention is towards the soul and I am not even aware of the body. Besides, I must have caused you such pain in my previous lives which prompted you to behave this way. It is good that I am getting rid of the karma I had accumulated. I do not have any anger or ill feelings about you. On the other hand, I feel sorry for you because you now have ruined your future due to the karma you have accumulated by trying to harm me." With that, the Lord's eyes were filled with tears of compassion.

What an amazing story of compassion and forgiveness! What an astonishing display of detachment from the body! The more we think about this, the more we understand the depth of Lord Mahavir's forgiveness. Appreciating the Lord's virtues is certainly a good thing, but we need to go one step ahead. We need to learn how to acquire those virtues for our own spiritual growth. And in order

to do that, we need to have a clear understanding of the foundation of the Lord's teachings; the teachings that will help us develop the divine virtues of tolerance, compassion and forgiveness.

Lord Mahavir heavily emphasized three core concepts:

- 1) Equality and inherent purity of every living being
- 2) Separation of Self and Non-self
- 3) Theory of Karma

Compassion, Tolerance and Forgiveness are rooted in these concepts. Lord Mahavir exemplified them in his own life.

If everyone is potentially a perfect/pure entity, then that state of purity is worth respecting and worshipping; not injuring. How can we hurt anyone? When one lives by this philosophy, one will always be friendly towards everyone. There is no need for grudge, enmity, or complaint. There is no question of getting even or settling an account.

The concept of separation of self and Non-self states that our pure soul is entirely different from our body, mind, senses, emotions of attachment and aversion. It teaches us that our problems stem from the intense focus on non-self around the clock. It advises us to concentrate on the pure soul and realize its infinite virtues; such as Compassion, Tolerance, and Forgiveness instead. These are the inherent virtues of pure soul that will help us stay away from animosity, hate, revenge and other negative emotions.

Theory of Karma teaches us that, if someone hurts us, we need to regard him just as a *nimmitt*. We need to think that the incidence happened due to the fruition of our own karma. The offender just acted as an instrument (*nimitta*). Instead of striking back, we need to thank that person for shaking off our old karma. How can we blame anyone other than our own karma? With this kind of thought process, anger, hate and revenge should disappear very fast because the focus has now shifted from the offender to our own self. This signals a huge shift in attitude, paving the way for inner transformation.

Jain canons tell us many stories about the Upsargas and Parishaha of Lord Mahavir. Lord faced all of those adverse situations calmly and bravely.

His actions were based on the core concepts outlined above. He derived his inner strength from them.

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That is the reason he always stayed peaceful and non-reactive. He never budged. Let us take a look

at a few more episodes from his life. While reading these stories, contemplate on the core concepts these episodes relate to.



An egoistic *tapasvi* named Goshala was impressed by the penance and various powers – labdhi – Bhagwan Mahavir had. He requested Lord Mahavir to take him under his fold. The Lord welcomed and made him his

disciple, exposed him to the Jain philosophy. Upon Goshala's request, the Lord taught him how to acquire the Tejo Leshya and advised him to use it only for noble purposes. Goshala then separated from the Lord, worked hard for six months and acquired the Tejo Leshya. He also learned the scriptures and was respected by others. He started thinking of himself as equal to the Lord and started telling his disciples that he was a Tirthankar. After a few years, Bhagwan Mahavir achieved Keval Gyan and became Tirthankar. When asked if Goshala was also a Tirthankar, the Lord said that it was not true. Soon the word got out and Goshala got very angry. He started criticizing and cursing the Lord. In the end, in the heat of anger, he threw the Tejo Leshya towards the Lord. The Tejo Leshya did not do much damage to the Lord; it reversed its course and inflicted severe pain on Goshala. Even after this incidence, the Lord maintained equanimity, showed compassion and forgave him. His only regret was that he could not bring about an inner change in Goshala in spite of his best efforts.



During the first year after taking Diksha, the Lord was travelling from one village to another. Many times wherever he found a quiet place, he would start meditating. Once he was in a deep meditation when a shepherd came with his

bulls and asked the Lord to attend to them while he went to milk his cows. The Lord was deep in meditation and so did not respond. When the shepherd returned, he did not find the bulls so he went searching for them for the whole night. In the meantime, the bulls returned. When Shepherd came back the next day, he saw the bulls and started blaming the Lord for not telling him about the bulls' whereabouts intentionally. He got angry and started beating the Lord badly with a thick rope. Lord did not react, maintained his calm.

Finally a heavenly god came and intervened. The shepherd apologized and the Lord forgave him. Then, the heavenly god bowed down to Mahavir Swami and requested, "Oh Lord, I would like to be at your service as you will have to undergo many hardships during your spiritual journey." Mahavir Swami answered, "One cannot progress spiritually

and attain Keval-jnān using other's help and support. To attain Keval-jnān and become an Arihanta one has to undertake all the efforts personally on the journey towards omniscience and liberation."

When the Lord visited anarya region inhabited by rude, ignorant, violent and illiterate people, he was treated like a thief, a symbol of bad luck etc. The Lord maintained calm and kept moving from one place to the other without getting disturbed. Once the Lord took a boat ride to cross the Ganges River. While in the boat, Nagkumar Dev created a sea storm out of revenge as he was wronged by the Lord when the latter was a Vasudev in one of the previous lives. Again, the Lord stayed peaceful. The situation was straightened out by Kambal and Shambal, the heavenly gods.

During the last year of his 12.5 years of sadhana, Bhagwan Mahavir was standing in a meditation posture near the village of Shammani. Just like during the first year of his sadhana, a cowherd left his oxen in the care of Lord Mahavir. The cowherd went into the village and returned a little later. The oxen had drifted away while grazing. Not finding his oxen, he asked, "Ascetic, where are my oxen?" Mahavir was in deep meditation and unaware of all this. The cowherd asked again, and once again he did not get a response. He was irritated and shouted, "You hypocrite! Are you deaf? Don't you hear anything?"

Mahavir still did not respond. The cowherd became very angry, "You pretender, it seems that both your ears are useless. Wait a minute! I will fix your ears." He picked long nail-like thorns from a nearby shrub and pierced the ears of Mahavir deeply by hammering the thorns in. Even such excruciating agony did not move Mahavir from his meditation or evoke any feeling of anger or aversion in him.

The reason Mahavir Swami had to bear this calamity was because of what he did as Triprushtha Vāsudev (birth no. 18), at that time, he liked to sleep while listening to music. He told his servant to stop the music once he fell asleep. However, his servant was enjoying the music and forgot to stop it. When he woke up and still heard the music playing, he was furious. To teach his servant a lesson, he had hot lead poured into his servant's ears so he would not be able to hear anything anymore. This servant was reborn as the cowherd who then proceeded to put the thorns in Mahavir swāmi's ears.

Lord Mahavir not only preached the concepts of equanimity, forgiveness, compassion and tolerance but he lived by those precepts even in the life threatening situations. His life should be a source of inspiration to all us. We need to realize that we are imperfect, so are the people around us. We are driven by our past karma, so are the people around us. We are all going to make mistakes at one time or the other. We need to reflect upon these realities plus the core teachings of the Lord and form a habit of showing compassion, tolerance and forgiveness every single moment. This is one of the most effective ways to lead a peaceful and serene life.

Forgiveness of World Religions

By Giriraj Jain



Jain



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The word forgiveness 'Kshama' means patience, forbearance and pardon. To pardon an enemy or a friend is the jewel of Yatis. Forbearance is the ornament of the brave. Being born in Jain family and practicing Jainism throughout my life, forgiveness is in my core and way of life. But I always think about how forgiveness is practiced in other major religions of the world. Although most world religions consider it to be an important virtue and include teachings about forgiveness, there are some differences in how it is viewed and practiced. In this article we bring you some of those details.

BUDDHISM



While the Buddhist tradition also places a strong value on forgiveness, it approaches this topic from a different angle. Forgiveness is a practice for removing emotions that would otherwise cause harm to our mental well-being. In Buddhism, focus is on controlling and avoiding emotions like anger as a way to practice forgiveness. The goal is to promote internal harmony that is free from regret and inner conflict.

Hatred leaves a lasting effect on our karma (actions) and forgiveness creates emotions with a wholesome effect. Buddhism questions the reality of passions that give rise to anger through meditation and insight. After examination, we realize that anger is only an impermanent emotion that we can fully experience and then release.

In Buddhist psychology, emotions like anger and hatred are based on projections and ignorance, not on wisdom and awareness. The elimination of anger is a lengthy process but through mindfulness, Buddhism is confident that an individual will realize anger is only temporal like many other mental states. Patience is one way of healing anger to achieve forgiveness as a wholesome effect.

"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else but you are the one who gets burned" — The Buddha
You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger." — The Buddha

HINDUISM



The Hindu tradition offers a variety of views on the topic of forgiveness. From the theistic perspective we find in the Hindu scriptures a description of forgiveness as "the one supreme peace" (Mahabharata). In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna, an avatar, or human incarnation of the God Vishnu, lists forgiveness as a divine characteristic when embodied by a human being. In the more philosophical Hindu traditions, a transcendental view is taken. When someone is wronged, the reflection arises that this, too, is the will of God. We don't need to focus on the one who has wronged us because they were just acting as the instrument of the Divine. Rather we can reflect on what lesson we can learn.

A less theistic Hindu might evoke the Law of Karma, of cause and effect. Yet being unable to discover all the causes leading up to the unfortunate effect, it is difficult to assign blame and therefore to engage in forgiveness. In fact from the Karmic perspective, everything that happens to us is the result of our own past actions in this or some previous life. As such, it is more skillful to acknowledge the impermanence of the transgression and let go. Letting go prevents it from causing continued suffering in the present. Even the thought of forgiveness keeps the event alive in memory. As for justice, the Law of Karma itself will hold the perpetrator accountable.

SIKHISM



In Sikhism, forgiveness is viewed as the remedy to anger. You forgive an offender when stimulated by compassion. Compassion generates peace, tranquility, humility and co-operation in human interactions. The act of forgiveness is considered a divine gift, not the work of human agency. It is believed that taking personal credit for forgiveness would cause increased pride, which would impede our spiritual progress.

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Anger is often considered the result of unfulfilled desire. If a person fulfills our desires and wants, we feel love for them but when they impede our desires anger can well up. The ego can easily feel slighted, embarrassed, belittled or in some other way be offended. As we learn to discipline our mind through meditation on the word 'Forgiveness', our ego and anger naturally turn to compassion and forgiveness. Since anger and forgiveness are considered opposites, the human mind can only contain one of them at a given time.

"To practice forgiveness is fasting, good conduct and contentment" — Guru Arjan Dev

"Where there is forgiveness, there God resides — Kabir

"Dispelled is anger as forgiveness is grasped" —Guru Amar Das

JUDAISM



In Judaism, forgiveness comes only from the one offended. Ideally a person, who has caused harm, needs to sincerely apologize, then the wronged person is religiously bound to forgive. However, even without an apology, forgiveness is considered a pious act. Offenses against God can only be forgiven by God, likewise an offense against a fellow human can only be forgiven by the offended person, though one may pray to God for His help in obtaining forgiveness from fellow humans. God's assistance can also be requested for help with a guilty conscience, which is forgiveness of oneself.

Judaism also emphasizes the importance of having a forgiving attitude towards the wrongs others have done towards us. In fact, if someone has wronged us and then asked for forgiveness, withholding forgiveness shifts the moral burden to us for our unwillingness to forgive. Teshuva, which, literally translates to "Returning," is a way of atoning, which requires cessation of harmful act, regret over past actions, confession and repentance. Yom Kippur is the "Day of Atonement" when Jews particularly strive to perform teshuva.

It is forbidden to be obdurate and not allow yourself to be appeased. On the contrary, one should be easily pacified and find it difficult to become angry. When asked by an offender for forgiveness, one should forgive with a sincere mind and a willing spirit." — Mishneh Torah

"Who takes vengeance or bears a grudge acts like one who, having cut one hand while handling a knife, avenges himself by stabbing the other hand." — Jerusalem Talmud

CHRISTIANITY



In Christian teachings, forgiving others plays an important role in spiritual life. Jesus said, "Forgive and you will be forgiven" and "if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

The Lord's Prayer best exemplifies this attitude, notably in these words: "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." The final words uttered by Christ during his suffering reinforce the importance of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In Christian religious teachings, we also find instruction to love your enemies and turn the other cheek.

Another beautiful expression of forgiveness and understanding is St. Francis of Assisi's prayer:

"Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. To be understood as to understand. To be loved is to love. For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. "

ISLAM



The word Islam is derived from the Semitic word slm meaning "peace" and forgiveness is a prerequisite for genuine peace. Islam places a great emphasis on asking forgiveness from God, who has the choice, either to forgive or to punish. And yet in Islam it is understood that God's mercy prevails over his wrath. Forgiveness is held as the better course of action whenever possible: "They avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive." In terms of clemency, we find this passage: "Although the just penalty for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by God. He does not love the unjust."

(Reference: <https://nexusnovel.wordpress.com/2007/01/03/forgiveness-in-different-religions/>)

Forgiveness course at <http://www.spiritualcompetency.com/srcQuiz.aspx?courseID=58>)



Forgiveness Festivals in Various Religions

Compiled By Jain Digest Editors: Sanjay Bhandari,
Allison Bergson and Dillip Parekh



Jain

Most world religions include teachings on the nature of forgiveness, and many of these teachings provide an underlying basis for many varying modern day traditions and practices of forgiveness. The customs, rituals, and beliefs are different, but intention is same; live and let live, forgive everyone, and live a soulful and peaceful life. In most religions, the practice of forgiveness is observed and emphasized during religious festivals. Here are some festivals celebrated by various religions in various parts of world in which forgiveness is a significant part.

1) Paryushan in Jainism

Paryushan is one of the most auspicious festivals among Jains. It is celebrated during August/September each year. The word 'Paryushan' means "*abiding, coming together*". It is that time when Jains observe spirituality by studying, fasting, meditating in order to cleanse the soul of impurities. Forgiveness is major part of this cleansing effort. It is a period of repentance for the acts of the previous year to shed one's accumulated karma. Jains endeavor to exercise self-discipline and do penance to purify their souls to the best of their individual capacities.



The *Shwetambara* Jains refer it as *Paryushan* and celebrate it for 8 days, while *Digambara* Jains refer it as *Daslakshana* and celebrate it for 10 days. Even though the rituals and customs of how *Paryushan* is

celebrated varies from one sect to another, from one region to another, everyone strives to observe the vows of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, purity of mind and body and non-possessiveness to a greater extent and resolve for greater effort for spiritual progress in the coming year. Going to temple, study of religious texts, listening to discourses, charitable giving, prayers, introspection, repentance, meditation are all part of the daily routine for the followers. Birth of Bhagwan Mahavir is celebrated on one of the days with rituals and cultural programs. These celebrations bring social harmony, unity and happiness to the people in the society.

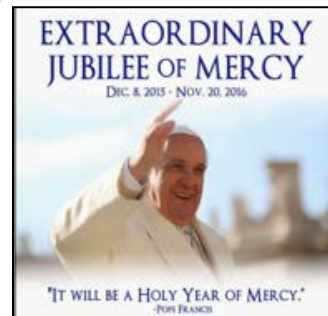


The last day of the *Paryushan*, called *Samvatsari*, is the most important one. On this day, most Jains try to observe a fast and collectively take part in *Pratikraman*, which is a set of introspective

prayers. In these prayers people ask for forgiveness for all

their misdeeds, ask for forgiveness for any non-violence they may have done against all types of life forms - people, animals, insects and even plants. This includes not only physical harm but also harm done via speech and thoughts. After *Pratikraman*, people meet with their friends and relatives and ask each other for forgiveness and start their relationships anew.

2) Jubilee of Mercy in Christianity



God's mercy is a prominent theme in Pope Francis' messages to the world. From the very beginning of his pontificate, he has invited the church to reflect on this amazing gift. In his first Angelus Address, Francis says, "Let us never tire of asking God's

forgiveness." In the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy set to be celebrated from December 8 to November 20, 2016, Pope Francis asked every diocese of the world to celebrate a dedicated period of Reconciliation during the season of Lent. (*Lent is a solemn religious observance that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends approximately six weeks later, before*



Easter Sunday. The purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer through prayer, doing penance, repentance of sins, almsgiving, atonement, and self-denial.)

A Jubilee Year is when the Catholic Church across the world takes approximately a year to focus on forgiveness and healing in a special way. Catholics are encouraged to join together in prayer, go to confession, and share the

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genius of Catholicism with others. The purpose of a Jubilee Year is to help people grow spiritually, strengthen their faith, and encourage works of service, and to promote unity within the Catholic Church and society in general. The last Jubilee Year was in 2000, called for by Pope Saint John Paul II.

During this time, the churches offer guidelines on what to do during the year and provide special opportunities for participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In addition to their individual confessions, people pray for the church, for the world, and for the community. They pray to the Lord that the mercy, love, and forgiveness will flourish among all people and all people of the world will have the courage to encounter the great love and mercy of God. It is a time to reconcile with one another and seek peace and joy with family and neighbor. It is a time for prayer and reflection. People gather together at church and they do morning and evening prayers. They believe that “If God is for us, who can be against us?” or “God is merciful, so why can’t we be too?”

(References: <http://visitor.stcdio.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/01/Festival-of-Forgiveness-Resources-web.pdf>
<http://dynamiccatholic.com/>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lent>)

3) Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in Judaism

In Judaism, it is important to realize that traditional Jewish teaching views forgiveness as a temporal, need of annual renewal and being received on the basis of our repentance and willingness to be obedient to His Law. Judaism mainly celebrates the following festivals of forgiveness in the beginning of year.



Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year and translates to “head” or “beginning of the year.” It starts on the first of Tishrei, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. In 2016, it began the evening of

Oct. 2. Rosh Hashanah recalls the creation of the world. It inaugurates the beginning of the Days of Awe, 10 days of introspection and repentance that culminates on Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement. Together, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are known as the High Holy Days.

Jews believe that God judges all creatures during the 10 Days of Awe, deciding their fate for the coming year. God inscribes these judgments in the “Book of Life.” People have until Yom Kippur to perform “teshuvah,” or repentance. If a person repents adequately so that their good deeds

outweigh their bad, they would then have a good year. As a result, Jews consider Rosh Hashanah and the Days of Awe as a time for prayer, good deeds, reflection on past mistakes and making amends to others.

Special customs observed on Rosh Hashanah include the sounding of the shofar, eating round challah, tashlich, and eating apples dipped in honey. The sounding of the shofar, an instrument made from a ram’s horn, is an essential and emblematic part of both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The ancient instrument’s plaintive cry serves as a call to



repentance and a reminder to Jews that God is their ruler. The round challah is a loaf of the traditional braided bread. The round shape symbolizes the cyclical nature of life and the crown of God. Raisins

are sometimes added to the dough for a sweet new year. During tashlich (“casting off”), people throw pieces of bread into a flowing body of water while reciting prayers. As the bread, which symbolizes the sins of the past year, is swept away, those who embrace this tradition are spiritually cleansed and renewed. The apples dipped in honey signify a wish for a healthy and sweet new year.

The last day of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, is set aside to atone for the sins of the past year. It is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. The Jews refrain from work and attend synagogue services on this day. Fasting for Yom Kippur begins at sunset on the evening the day before and ends after 25 hours. It is customary to wear white on this holiday, which symbolizes purity and calls to mind the promise that our sins shall be made as white as snow.

It is interesting to note that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and God, not for sins against another person. To atone for sins against another person, you must first seek reconciliation with that person, correcting the wrongs you committed against them if possible. That must all be done before Yom Kippur.

(References: <http://www.mystatesman.com/news/lifestyles/religion/understanding-the-jewish-new-year-of-rosh-hashanah/nsj9Z/>
<http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm>)

4) Holi in Hinduism



Holi is a two-day festival where the first day is known as Holika Dahan (fire) and second day is the celebration of colors and is known as Rangwali Holi.

Holi celebrations start on the first day where people make a Holika bonfire at night

around which people gather, do religious rituals and pray that their internal evil should be destroyed as the bonfire starts. The ritual symbolizes the victory of good over evil. The second day is known as Rangwali (with colors) Holi. Holi is celebrated on the Phalgun Purnima (Full Moon). The festival date varies every year, per the Hindu calendar, and typically comes in March, or sometimes February in the Gregorian calendar.



The festival signifies the victory of good over evil, the arrival of spring, end of winter, and for many a festive day to meet others, play and laugh, forget and forgive, repair ruptured relationships and

rekindling of old friendship and making new ones. It is the festive day to end and rid oneself of past errors, end conflicts by meeting others, a day to forget and forgive. People pay or forgive debts, as well as deal anew with those in their lives. Holi is very significant in social terms as it helps many rivals to reunite by putting aside all their animosity, egos, or ill feelings. The festival brings home the lesson of spiritual and social harmony.

(Reference: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holi>)

5) Eid ul-Fitr and Shab E Barat in Islam

Eid ul-Fitr (festival of breaking of the fast) is celebrated by all Muslims around the world that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. Eid ul-Fitr is celebrated for one, two, or three days. It is a time to give in charity to those in need, and celebrate with family and friends the completion of a month of blessings and joy. On the day of Eid, Muslims gather early in the morning in outdoor locations or mosques to perform the Eid prayer. This consists of a sermon followed by a short congregational prayer. After the Eid prayer, Muslims visit family and friends and give gifts to each other.

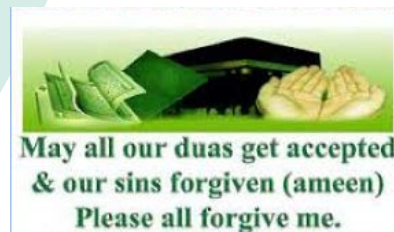


In Indonesia, Eid ul-Fitr is popularly known as Lebaran. The Muslims are encouraged on this day to forgive and forget any differences

with others or animosities that may have occurred during the year. As an obligatory act of charity, money is paid to the poor

and the needy before performing the Eid prayer. The Eid prayer is followed by the sermon and then a supplication asking for Allah's forgiveness, mercy, peace and blessings for all living beings across the world. During Lebaran one of the largest temporary human migrations takes place, as workers return to their home town or city to celebrate with their families and to ask forgiveness from parents, in-laws, and other elders.

In Indonesia, Muslims greet one another with "*mohon maaf lahir dan batin*", literally translated as "*Please forgive (me) outwardly and internally*" and in Malaysia, they say "*maaf zahir dan batin*", which means "*Forgive my physical and emotional (wrongdoings)*".



In the month of Shaban, **Shab-E-Barat** is celebrated with pomp and enthusiasm by Muslims all over the world. On the night of Shab-E-Barat Allah writes the destinies of all men for the

coming year by taking into account the deeds committed by them in the past. The festival is celebrated either on the thirteenth or on the fourteenth day of Shaban, the eighth month of the Muslim year. This happens to be fifteen days before the beginning of Holy Month of Ramadan. Shab-E-Barat means the night of forgiveness or Day of Atonement. People pray to Allah both in preparation for Ramadan and for the forgiveness of the sins committed by them. The festival is also known as Boraks Nigh.



Skies light up on the night of Shab-E-Barat as the festival is celebrated in the night. Houses and streets are also illuminated by candles and strands of electric bulbs to provide a joyful ambiance

to the festival. Colorful fireworks keep dazzling the skies as the Muslims stay awake on the night of Shab-E-Barat. This is due to a belief that Allah writes the destinies of all living beings for the coming years in heaven during the night.

(References: <http://aboutislamandmuslims.blogspot.com/2010/07/shab-e-barat-night-of-forgiveness.html><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebaran>)

6) Lantern Dedication in Buddhism

Lantern dedication is an old traditional Buddhist custom to dedicate a lantern on Buddha's Birthday. It falls on 8th day of the fourth month by lunar calendar according to the Mahayana tradition. In 2016 it was celebrated on May 14 and 15. Buddhists dedicate their lanterns to renew their commitment to help themselves and others attain enlightenment, to gain spiritual strength for their problems, or for the peace of the world and happiness of all beings, or on behalf of or in memory of a family member or friend. The dedication is personally written on a piece of paper which is then attached to the lantern. Buddha's Birthday is a special occasion, so along with a lantern dedication it is a custom to make a special donation to the temple in order to express one's gratitude and support the good work. People are advised to "dedicate lanterns to parents, grand-parents, children, relatives, friends, a lover, spouse, partner or yourself. Or to those who are deceased, ill or in difficulties and hardships. Express your gratitude, let your good will prevail, send prayers and good wishes to show that you love and care. Reconcile the differences, seek forgiveness or send a message of hope conveying words of love and compassion. Remember people who helped and inspired you and give them your thanks and love. Open your heart and celebrate life."

The Shinnyo-en Foundation, part of a Japanese Buddhist group that has temples in multiple locations in the US, organizes Floating Lantern events in many parts of the world. One such event takes place every year in Honolulu, Hawaii on Memorial Day that



draws over 50,000 people. Families line up from dawn that morning to obtain a lantern kit, consisting of a foam board on which they could place a box frame made of thin plastic sheet with a candle in the middle. Individuals write names of family and friends that they have lost; either to natural causes, illnesses, accidents, violence or for reasons that are beyond our natural comprehension. Many write messages of love, pasted photographs and write the things that they may not have been able to say to the person while they were still alive. Each person is able to experience their own personal moment. At dusk, individuals with lanterns are asked to walk a few steps into the water and push their lanterns out. As the sky grows dark, the soft glimmer of the candle light coming through the plastic sheet on each lantern can be seen at a distant as the tides take the lanterns further out

into the sea. The uniformity of the light and the lanterns is a stark reminder of the commonality of spirit and sentiments behind the individual lanterns.



A similar ceremony called "The Shinnyo Lantern Floating for Peace" is held in Lincoln Center Hearst Plaza in New York City in September since 2013.

(References: <http://zenbuddhisttemple.org/holidays.html>)

An article by Poorvi Parekh "Sharing a Universal Message of Peace" published in JCSC Connect, July 2014

Watch the 2016 Floating Lantern ceremony in Hawaii at http://www.lanternfloatinghawaii.com/page/view_ceremony

7) Ubumuntu Arts Festival in Rwanda



The Ubumuntu Festival in Rwanda is an annual festival celebrated in July of each year about forgiveness and peaceful co-existence in commemoration of the one hundred day genocide against the Tutsi clan in 1994. "Ubumuntu" translates to being human, and the festival emphasizes the humanitarian qualities of peace and forgiveness nationally and internationally.



The festival consists of visual, musical, and theatrical performances focusing on concepts like nonviolence and community healing. The festival also provides workshops and opportunities for young artists to refine and gain insight into their craft. The founder of the festival, Hope Azeda was inspired by the words of social rights activist Desmond Tutu which have become the slogan for the festival: "I am because you are, you are because I am: we are human together." Desmond Tutu insisted that forgiveness is an integral component of reconciliation. In 2016, over 18 different countries participated in the festival that took place at the amphitheater of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre in Gisozi from July 14-17th.

(Reference: www.ubumuntuartsfestival.com)



8) Moatsü and Tokhu Emong in Nagaland, India

Moatsü, is a premier festival of the Ao community in Nagaland. Moatsü is celebrated in the first week of May every year. Various rituals are performed during this period. The Aos observe Moatsü Mong after the sowing is done. The festival provides them a period of recreation and entertainment after the stressful work of clearing fields, burning jungles, sowing seeds, cleaning up the Tsubu (wells) and repairs and construction of houses by elders of the Putu Menden, stretching over a week. The Moatsü festival is marked by peppy songs and dances. The whole festival is full of merry making and fun. During this festival one of the symbolic celebrations is Sangpangtu, where a big fire is lit and men and women sit around it putting on their complete best attire, the womenfolk serving the wine and meat.



This festival is attended by a host of dignitaries that includes ministers, parliamentary secretaries, legislators, top government officials and people from different tribes. During the 2016 festivities, the chief guest, Nagaland Minister CL John, said that traditional festivals like Moatsü are a time for freely giving and also a time for forgiveness. The community leaders here believe that this festival preserves the traditional values like truth, honesty, and hard-work for the sake of the younger generation.



People of the Lotha tribe in Nagaland celebrate Tokhu Emong, which is also a post-harvest festival. The festival is celebrated for nine days with lots of enthusiasm and fun as this festival

brings the time to rejoice the fruit of hard work with the end of labor period of harvesting. It starts in November. The nine day long festival creates the dazzling ambience all around with jubilant people dressed in their best traditional attire with the common feeling of unity and brotherhood. It is the time to show gratitude towards each other, all people come together for celebration, forgiving past animosity and bitterness. The festival is marked by preparing delicious delicacies and inviting all friends and relatives for feast, where all people enjoy by dining, singing and dancing together.

There is also a trend of exchanging gifts of food and drinks as a token of love and friendship.

(References: <http://morungexpress.com/traditional-festivals-a-time-for-forgiveness/> • http://www.festivalsofindia.in/tokhu_emong/)

9) Maslenitsa in Russian and Ukrainian communities



Maslenitsa has its origins in the pagan tradition. In Slavic mythology, Maslenitsa is a sun festival, personified by the ancient god Volos and a celebration of the imminent end of the

winter. In the Christian tradition, Maslenitsa is the last week before the onset of Great Lent.

During the week of Maslenitsa, meat is forbidden to Orthodox Christians, and it is the last week during which eggs, milk, cheese and other dairy products are permitted, leading to its name of “Cheesefare week” or “Crepe week”. The last day of the Cheesefare Week is called “Forgiveness Sunday.” Relatives and friends ask each other for forgiveness and may offer small presents. As the culmination of the celebration people gather to “strip Lady Maslenitsa of her finery” and burn her in a bonfire. Leftover pancakes may also be thrown into the fire and Lady Maslenitsa’s ashes are buried in the snow to “fertilize the crops.”



At Vespers on Sunday evening, people may make a poklon (bow) before one another and ask forgiveness. Another name for Forgiveness Sunday is “Cheesefare Sunday,” because for devout Orthodox Christians it is the last day on which dairy products may be consumed until Easter.

Fish, wine, and olive oil will also be forbidden on most days of Great Lent. The day following Cheesefare Sunday is called Clean Monday, as the people have confessed their sins, asked forgiveness, and begin Great Lent with a clean slate.

(Reference: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslenitsa>)

10) Bëtskнатé in Columbia



In the valley of Sibundoy, located in the mountains of the department of Putumayo, the beginning of February marks a special time of celebration for the

region's indigenous communities—the Camëntsá and the Inga. The festival of Bëtskнатé, also known as “The Big Day”, or “The Carnival of Forgiveness” is a time to celebrate the past, the present, and the future. Marking the beginning of a new year for the Camëntsá and the Inga, Bëtskнатé is also a time to celebrate the unique culture and heritage of the valley of Sibundoy, to give thanks for the bounty delivered by Mother Earth during the previous year, and to come together as a community in the spirit of reconciliation, peace and respect.



is transformed into a colorful swirl of activity as centuries old traditions are brought to life. Thousands take to the streets dressed

in elaborate traditional costumes to partake in the music, dance and diverse ceremonies that characterize the festival, which draws to a close on Ash Wednesday. However, Bëtskнатé is not just a time to dress up, play music, and drink chicha. Above all, it is a time for reflection and the propagation of their culture to younger members of the community. Knowledge and traditions are passed down through generations, with family lineage determining the role one plays in the festival.

The main day of the festival begins in a small settlement in the outskirts of Sibundoy. From behind an elaborate red wooden mask, the Matachín, who carries the responsibility of leading the festival, sets off towards the center of Sibundoy, ringing a bell to invite the rest of the community to follow behind. A great, colorful parade filled with music and dancing is formed, winding through the town of Sibundoy and eventually culminating at the central church for a special mass.

Revelers then gather by the thousands in the Plaza of Inter-Culturality, where in between music and dancing, a special ritual takes place between the community and its leaders, known as taitas. In a show of modesty and rectitude, members of the Camëntsá approach the taitas one by one to ask for forgiveness and advice on how to better themselves and their community in the coming year.

(Reference: <https://thecitypaperbogota.com/living/betsknate-festival-an-ancient-carnival-of-forgiveness/12250>)

Continued from page 33

*Launch of JITO Chennai Angel Fund Club
JITO Chennai Chapter leaders, Mr. Anil Jain & Mr. Jaswanth Munoth, launched an angel fund called “JITO Chennai Angel Forum”. This fund will invest in diversified sectors and is committed to helping companies become worth a billion dollars and to helping the angel investors to make the most profitable returns.*

Overall, participants were busy networking, learning, and discovering many new things during their visits to Silicon Valley companies and enjoyed mouth-watering and delicious food at different locations.

On behalf of the G2G conference committee Mr. Satish Parakh Chairman G2G, Mr. Milind Shah Co-Convener G2G, and Mr. Prem Jain (led the US Advisory team) are very much thankful to all volunteers (India & US) for their hard work, dedication and commitment; finally thanking the energetic masters of ceremonies, Ms. Ankita Parakh and Mr.

Sanjay Lodha, Convener G2G, who executed the entire two-four day program in a timely manner with high quality. All in all, the event will be remembered for many years, and it was a big success!

Challenges with Practicing Forgiveness

By Hema Pokharna, PhD



Jain



Dr. Hema Pokharna is a Certified Nonviolent Communication (NVC) Trainer. As an Executive Coach and Consultant she works with leaders and their teams to improve personal and organizational collaborative leadership. Hema is also an interfaith peacemaker and mediator, and has served on the board of Parliament of World Religions, Play for peace and presently serves on the board of Council of Religious Leaders of Chicago, JSMC and the JAINA Interfaith Committee. e-mail: hemapokharna.phd@gmail.com

“Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.” ~ Paul Boese

“Never forget the three powerful resources you always have available to you: love, prayer, and forgiveness.” ~ H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.” ~ Lewis B. Smedes

The other day I was speaking at an interfaith gathering and was introduced as a Jain. As I came back to my seat, a person asked me, “Is Jainism that forgiveness religion?” I replied “yes, a forgiveness religion, because at its core it is a way of life that teaches to live and let live.”

And I pondered: If I am a Jain, am I a forgiving person? As I continue to contemplate and introspect, I am reminded of the stories of Mahavir and Chandakaushik, Maina Sundari, Goshala, Nelson Mandela, Dalai Lama, and many more stories of forgiveness and reconciliation. I connected to my own work in Nonviolent Communication and restorative justice. There are so many layers and flavors of forgiveness. Mahatma Gandhi’s Guru Shrimad Rajchandraji has said that forgiveness is a doorway to liberation. This is a very big reason to practice forgiveness. Christ’s last words were, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

It is usually not easy to forgive ourselves or others, because we don’t understand what forgiveness is. To forgive someone who has behaved in ways that you did not enjoy or stimulated hurt in you does not mean you are letting that person off the hook. It does not mean you are excusing that person for their offenses. It does not even mean you are completely over what they have done. It simply means you are letting yourself off of their emotional hook and that you can have full and easy access to your own love, peace, and presence.

Forgiveness is a practice, and like meditation, it needs to be cultivated and practiced regularly. Forgiveness saves spiritual, physical, emotional well-being, and relationships from the corrosive damage of anger and the high cost of hatred and revenge. It is quite easy and common to deprive ourselves of our own freedom and choice to be happy by not forgiving and accepting what is.

In this article I would like to provide the thought process (or the negative mindset) that we are often faced with and a possible solution to deal with it. I want to share five reasons that I have had quite a bit of trouble with it in my own daily life, which most others face too; regardless of higher education, income, and many other successes in life

1. “Forgiving someone makes me look weak. I want to be strong and superior.”

This one can be quite subtle. You tell yourself you are right and that forgiving would mean you are giving in or are a loser. You isolate yourself and suffer internally, because you love relationships and long to be accepted for who you are and who you want to be.

What to do instead: Make a list of the different people in your life you have trouble forgiving. Make a note of your hurt feelings and the reasons why you were hurt. Look for a theme of the story you tell yourself about what actually happened. What were your values that were not honored? Awareness is the first step towards healthy ways of being with yourself when you feel hurt and upset with others.

2. “If I ignore it, it will go away.”

Very often we brush away an insult or harsh words by saying “that’s okay” or “not a problem.” The insult just gets buried and resurfaces later. Unresolved issues get stored in your tissues and manifest in the form of disease or colds or blisters and pimples.

What to do instead: Again, awareness of how you feel is crucial. Ignoring how we feel is dismissal of our own feelings. Thank people when they apologize instead of saying that’s okay. Talk it over with someone close; share the sadness/anger, and find a healthier perspective on what happened.

3. “The person has to pay for it. They need to be punished and learn from it.”

How we respond to others can guide how others act towards us. People will attack or harshly criticize to let out their own frustration because they have had an awful day or week, or simply do not like their lives that much. One should try to understand that the focus here was not “you” and avoid adding to their misery.

What to do instead: Be aware that you are hurt not because of others’ actions but because of your need for respect, love, and possibly connection. Release the other from blame and unfairness by focusing on what matters most to you, and give that to yourself. Give yourself the love and care that you wished the other person would give to you. The thought of revenge stems from a deep need for empathy. Give yourself empathy, or ask someone for empathy for what happened. If you wish, you can honestly say, “I felt like this (fill in the blank) when you said or did this (fill in the blank). Just saying this can support a conversation where you can connect with what happened inside you and permit them to see how they contributed to your pain. This can lead to trust in the relationship.

4. “The person has to say sorry first”

This rarely ever happens. You wind up spending much time in your day thinking about what other people should and should not have done to you. Your focus is on the other person and how wrong they were, and you wait, contemplating and wishing they would come and apologize. This is a recipe for misery and chronic depression.

What to do instead: Focus on you. Bring your attention and energy to you instead of waiting. Appreciate yourself, and focus and design relationships that nurture you and your dreams and goals. Let go off your focus on the person’s wrong actions or words, and re-channel your energies to wishing the other well. See the situation “as-is,” not “what I want it to be.” And ask yourself: What is one small step I can take today to find peace within myself? Meditate, pray, or go exercise.

5. “I can’t let go of the hurt”

This is a very common problem. When hurt by someone, many people can’t let go of the hurt. They relive the incident over and over in their mind and either get angry or depressed. They over analyze the situation, brood over the hurtful remarks and may talk about it with others over and over again. They get some type of satisfaction by staying unhappy and look for sympathy from others for their miserable state.

What to do instead: To get over such situations, knowledge of Karma Theory is very useful. An understanding and belief that whatever happens to us is because of our own past karma, brings in peace to ourselves. A feeling of impermanence of the world, relationships also helps us put things in perspective. We also have to realize that events will happen and it is up to us how we react to them. By staying in the past, we are ruining our present & our future, and we can choose not to do so.

Cultivate a daily practice of *pratikraman* to release yourself of any hurts big and small. Build awareness that will allow you to live and let others live, and realize that every person has the right to be who he or she is. Integrate *Anekantvad* in your study and understanding.

Forgiveness: Miraculous Energy for Complete Healing of the Soul

By Jain Samani Dr. Suyashnidhi (JPP, Bangalore)



Jain



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

The dictionary defines Forgiveness as the act of excusing a mistake or offense; it is also defined as compassionate feelings that support a willingness to forgive.

Forgiveness is termed as Kshama in Hindi which can be broken into ksha + maa. 'Ksha' stands for kshay which means 'to destroy' and 'maa' stands for maan which means pride. A person can awaken the true nature of soul with an attribute of forgiveness by destroying the feeling of pride from within.

Tirthankar Bhagwan Mahavir Swami explained the benefits of forgiveness in the 18th sutra of 29th chapter of Uttaradhyayan Sutra. By forgiveness, a person begets the



happiness of mind and heart. By this, he produces feelings of friendship towards all the living beings of universe. The feelings of friendship help purify thoughts making a person free from all fears.

Forgiveness allows you explore yourself.

- Forgiveness is the peace you learn to feel when you allow the grief, resentment, and hurt to let go from you.
- Forgiveness is for you and not the offender.
- Forgiveness is taking responsibility for your life situations.
- Forgiveness is about your healing and not about the people who hurt you.
- Forgiveness helps you get control over your feelings.
- Forgiveness can improve your mental and physical health.
- Forgiveness is becoming a hero instead of a victim, as it is aptly said that forgiveness is the virtue of the courageous and not the coward.

Forgiveness is also a form of non-violence. This reflects love, kindness, and non-injury. Human tendency to prove themselves as right nourishes their ego which in turn leads to judging and condoning others. Bad judgment leading to encroachment of negative emotions can be designated as violence in some form. Forgiveness helps people control their emotions so they maintain good judgment. They do not waste precious energy trapped in anger and hurt over things they can do nothing about. Forgiveness is a gift to you. It frees you from the past, past experiences, and past relationships. It allows you to live in the present moment. When you forgive yourself and forgive others, you are indeed free. Many times forgiving others is comparatively easier than forgiving your own self. One needs to bring in acceptance that everything is transient in this mundane world and nobody is perfect here - everyone tends to commit mistakes in one way or the other. As long as a person is trapped in anger, he will not be able to clear his mind enough to make the best possible decisions, he would be contemplating more about the person who hurt him than about his own well-being. Learning to forgive



allows us to make the best possible life decisions. Hurt and anger are meant to be fleeting emotions, not permanent fixtures. So it is better to change the changeable and accept the unchangeable.

Forgive others not only because they deserve forgiveness, but also because you deserve peace. Forgiveness can be defined as the experience of peace and understanding. Forgiveness allows you to feel this inner peace and stillness by helping one to live in the present moment. Forgiveness is the powerful assertion that bad things will not ruin your today even though they may have spoiled your past. Forgiveness doesn't excuse their actions. Instead, it stops their actions from destroying your heart. We tend to complain how bad we felt when someone hurt us. But complaining does not have effect on the other person; it hurts us a great deal. Once we start practicing forgiveness, none of the bad things can distract one's inner peace and that is the indication of true forgiveness and detachment achieved.

Digest

Pujya Gurudev Dr. Shri Padamchandra ji Maharaj Saheb in his orations on one of the compositions of Acharya Shri Jaymal ji Maharaj i.e. 'Kshama Dharam' describes how the causes of anger, pride, and other passions hinder the spiritual journey of many souls and this has changed the lives of many sadhaks in south India during chaturmas.

Forgiveness helps reduce depression, decrease stress, decrease anger, increase hopefulness, improve spiritual connection, increase emotional self-confidence, and help heal relationships.

Effects of Not Forgiving

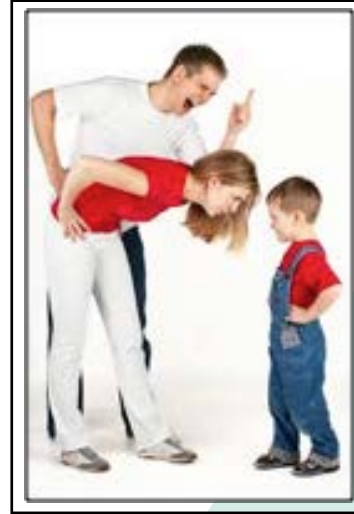
Not forgiving and holding on to a past hurtful events, creates negative energies such as anger, judgment, criticism, resentment, etc. These harbored emotions are like toxins in the body which create stress and can even lead to illness and perhaps in extreme cases, even disease. Such emotions affect us on all levels: mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. We begin to feel "lost" in our life, losing sight of what our passions are and what brings us joy. They can even affect our day to day experiences. You shackle yourself to the person who hurt you. It binds you to pain.

Forgiveness sets you free from all the bondages. 23rd Tirthankara's past ten life times are ideal examples of how forgiveness in each birth allowed the jiva of Parshvanath to reduce the baggage of karmas and attain salvation, Moksha.

How to develop forgiveness?

Forgiveness is the innate quality of every soul. One cannot attain it from outside as it is already there inside. The only thing one has to do is to let go of things and let go of the emotions that have entered the soul from outside sources. The moment a person learns to let go, achieving forgiveness becomes simple and easier. There are many situations that happen in our lives that hurt us deeply and it takes efforts to let go of such events. But have you ever thought about the small little things that happen in our daily life that cause anger, pain, and frustration? Some of the situations we come across during our daily life may be: getting upset with the spouse for small reasons like not giving any compliments to wife for cooking, for not carrying out activities the way the spouse wants to get them done, so on and so forth. Many times parents get angry with children because they don't live up to their expectations. Such apparently small things and the emotional distress associated with them add up over time.

We need to be watchful of these, learn to introspect, and remove such negative feelings right away.



How can you do that? Think if all these situations are worth getting upset. Will I benefit from all these reactions? Is getting angry becoming my habit? What is the real reason for getting upset? Am I stressing out my life unnecessarily? Daily impartial introspection and analysis will give you answers to all these questions.

Visualizing particular situations and letting them out of your body and mind

through practice of conscious and mindful breathing can help develop qualities of forgiveness, patience, happiness, peace, and joy. With each breath in, inhale the energy of positivity and with each breath out, exhale all the adversities and negativities out of your body and mind.

Forgiveness can also be achieved if one develops few of the following virtues:

- Tolerance
- Acceptance
- Simplicity
- Modesty or submissiveness

A meditative technique called Jain Anuppeha Dhyana Yog Sadhana propounded by Jaygacchiya Jain Saint Dr. Shri Padamchandra ji Maharaj Saheb gives us special techniques with therapeutic results for cases having issues of non-forgiveness influencing on physical mental health. This sadhana is taught world-wide as Jain Anuppeha Dhyana Yog Sadhana Shivir. Hundreds of people have been benefited through this therapy till now.

Conclusion

Every pious soul ultimately seeks spiritual growth and strives for liberation from all fetters of karmas. Learning to forgive self and others would surely help curb all the problems and blossom happiness, peace, and joy from within.

Choosing Forgiveness in Difficult Situations

By Dillip V. Shah, Philadelphia



Jain

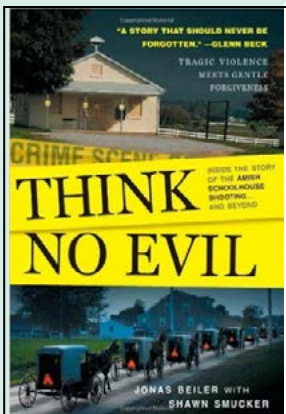


Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is a past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Diaspora Committee and member of the Academic Liaison Committee. He is a frequent contributor to the Jain Digest. e-mail: dilipvshah@gmail.com

"Unforgivable" is an adjective used by many in exasperation, anger or in resignation. We see and hear about acts of brutal violence everywhere and wonder how the victim's families must be dealing with such atrocities. The feelings of anger and retaliation seem like a normal reaction. But many decide to take a different path; path of love, kindness, forgiveness. In this article we bring you a few true events at a national, communal and individual level that challenge the need of the word "unforgivable" in our psyche.

United Nations has declared October 2nd, birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, as an international day of celebration of Non Violence. But a small Amish farmland of Lancaster County in Pennsylvania remembers October 2, 2006 for a very different reason. A typical day in autumn everywhere is quiet and peaceful. However this town was robbed of the peace with sounds of gunfire from inside an Amish one room School. When the police broke in, they discovered the bodies of 10 girls between the ages of 6 and 13 who were shot by a local 36 year old Charles Carl Roberts, who had then committed suicide. Five of the girls died of gunshot wounds – two of those were sisters.

Charles Roberts was himself a father of two. His family and his in-laws all lived in this community of 3,000 Amish and Englishmen (term Amish use for Non-Amish). He was a milk truck driver serving the community. Nine years earlier, his wife delivered their first child that died after living only for 20 minutes. Charles blamed God for the tragedy and resolved to avenge the death of his little girl. When he entered the school, some of the children even recognized him. On the blackboard he noticed a welcoming sign. "Visitors Bubble Up our Days". It did not deter him from the gruesome act he had planned.



The unfathomable story was covered extensively by the local and national press informing people all around the world. The Amish community scrupulously avoids publicity but the tragedy exposed them to the shocked and bewildered world. Not only the Amish but the entire Lancaster County came together in their shock and grief. Thousands gathered at various churches for prayers. Over 3,000 motorcyclists from nearby

Chester county, rode together, in a procession over 12 miles long. Letters of sympathy for the parents of the victims poured from around the world – some were addressed simply to "Amish families, USA." Over four million dollars were raised in support of the families of victims.

In a country, where gun violence is on an increase, what made news in this case was not the reaction of the world at large or the media coverage or the justice system, but the response to the tragedy from the victimized community. Their reaction showed their deep adherence to their Christian beliefs, their grace and collective projection of forgiveness.

The Amish community didn't cast blame, point fingers or held press conference with lawyers on their side. Instead, they reached out with grace and compassion to the killer's family. The afternoon of the shooting, before the blood on the school floor had even dried, an Amish grandfather of one of the killed girl, expressed forgiveness towards the killer. The same day, Amish neighbors visited Roberts family to comfort them in their pain and sorrow. Robert's family was invited to the funeral of one of the girls and Amish mourners outnumbered English mourners at the funeral of Charles Roberts. When Roberts family expressed desire to move out of the community, the Amish counseled them to stay. They also raised funds for the orphaned kids of Charles Roberts.

This act of forgiveness was not an act of a few individuals but of an entire community that followed the teachings of Jesus who taught his followers to forgive one another and place the needs of others before themselves. This noble act was covered by more than 3,000 stories worldwide and more than half a million websites. Forgiveness healed the entire community. There are a few books written about this extraordinary event.

(<http://lanasterpa.com/amish-blog/amish-shooting-forgiveness-books/>)

South Africa gained independence in 1910 but it became the government of white minority denying basic human rights to the black majority. Afrikaner National Party won the general election in 1948 under the slogan "apartheid" (literally "separateness") and in 1950 Apartheid became the law. A series of Land Acts set aside more than 80 percent of the country's land for the white minority, and "pass laws"

Digest

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.

Nelson Mandela



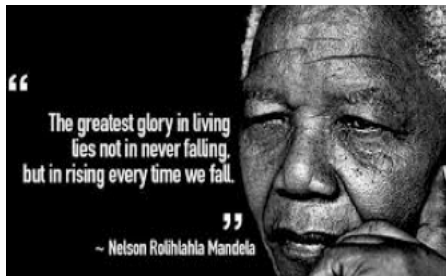
required non-whites to carry documents authorizing their presence in restricted areas.

Racial segregation and white

supremacy was not only legalized, it was brutally enforced. Blacks were forced out of their homes and forced to live in designated black hamlets. Multitude cases of rape, torture, deaths in detention, political assassinations and even human burning were carried out by whites against the blacks. Any resistance by native blacks was brutally crushed – leaders of the movement killed and things kept getting worst. Despite strong and consistent opposition to apartheid within and outside of South Africa, its laws remained in effect for the better part of 50 years. By 1961, most resistant leaders had been captured and sentenced to long prison terms or executed. Nelson Mandela, a founder of the military wing of the ANC, was incarcerated from 1963 to 1990; his imprisonment drew international attention and helped garner support for the anti-apartheid cause. In prison, he read the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and became his great admirer.

Mandela was released from prison in 1990. As a recognized voice of the black majority and working closely with Bishop Desmond Tutu, Mandela prevailed

on his people to renounce violence and forget vengeance. He worked closely with President de Klerk's government to draw up a new constitution. President F.W. de Klerk began to repeal most of the legislation that provided the basis for apartheid. After both sides made concessions, they reached agreement in 1993. A new constitution, which enfranchised blacks and other racial groups, took effect in 1994, and elections that year led to a coalition government with a nonwhite majority, and Nelson Mandela becoming the first black President of the country marking the official end of the apartheid system. Later in 1993, both Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk shared Nobel Peace Prize "for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa".



The war on the majority native population ended but issues of guilt, punishment, revenge etc. were on everyone's mind. In 1995, the government formed Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate gross human rights violations that occurred in the previous 35 years. The intent was to prevent reoccurrence of atrocities and to unify the country. The commission left crucial questions about apartheid-era atrocities unanswered. After much debate, South Africa's TRC was the first truth commission to offer amnesty to individuals who fully confessed in public their role in politically motivated crimes. This initiative rejected the judicial concept of "Retributive Justice" and adopted noble concept of "Restorative Justice". TRC model is often seen as a model of conflict resolution.

Rwanda, a small landlocked country in east-central Africa is another example of human capacity to inflict terrible crimes on fellow human beings and also the miraculous powers of forgiveness. The country has a long and turbulent history of conflicts between majority Hutus and minority Tutsis. The two ethnic groups are very similar and speak the same language, inhabit the same areas, live as neighbors and follow the same traditions. Tutsis are believed to be of Ethiopian descent. When the Belgian colonists arrived in 1916, they produced identity cards classifying people according to their ethnicity. The Belgians considered Tutsis to be superior to the Hutus. As a result, the Tutsis enjoyed better jobs and educational opportunities than the Hutus. The result was a gradual buildup of resentment among the Hutus against the Tutsis culminating in series of riots. In 1959 more than 20,000 Tutsis were killed and many more Tutsis fled to the neighboring countries. When the Belgians relinquished power and granted Rwanda independence in 1962, the Hutus took their place. In the years after independence, the Hutu government routinely blamed Tutsis for every crisis in Rwanda.

The Tutsi refugees in neighboring Uganda formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) with the aim of overthrowing Hutu regime and securing their right to return to their homeland. Rwandan President Habyarimana exploited that threat and accused Tutsis inside Rwanda of being traitors and RPF collaborators. By 1991, Rwandan Armed forces began to equip civilian militias that comprised of extremist Hutus. In August 1993, a peace deal emerged between Habyarimana and RPF but it did not stop the strife between the tribes. Hutu and RPF leaders negotiated a power sharing agreement in Tanzania. 2,500 UN peace keeping forces (UNAMIR) were deployed to bring about implementation of the peace treaty. Family members of President Habyarimana setup a radio station and the President delayed implementation of the peace treaty.

On April 6, 1994, President Habyarimana and President Ntaryamira of neighboring Burundi were killed in a mysterious rocket attack on their plane while returning from Tanzania. No one knows who shot the plane down but the incident immediately provoked what has become known as



Rwandan Genocide. Killings began that night as the Rwandan Armed Forces set up roadblocks and militia went from door to door killing people. The

presidential guard orchestrated a campaign of retribution against leaders of the political opposition and slaughtering of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Initially, only the military officials carried out the brutal campaign but soon many others joined the mayhem. UNAMIR forces were not permitted to intervene. Neighbors killed members of Tutsi family members they had known for years, done business with or gone to church with. When the dust settled, Habyarimana's death triggered 100 day orgy of violence resulting in brutal deaths of 800,000 people, some 300,000 of them were thought to be children. The deaths were by machetes. UN peace keeping forces were withdrawn 15 days after the carnage began. By the time the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front gained control of the country through a military offensive in early July, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were dead and many more displaced from their homes. The RPF victory created 2 million more refugees (mainly Hutus) from Rwanda, exacerbating what had already become a full-blown humanitarian crisis.

In April of 2000, Paul Kagame was elected as Rwanda's first Tutsi President. To foster national reconciliation he issued a decree to release sixty thousand lower level killers and looters from the 1994 genocide that had owned up their crimes. When these criminals arrived back into their towns and villages, they came face to face with the families of the persons they had killed. With heavy heart, they repented and confessed to the families of the victims. Small groups of Hutus and Tutsis are counseled over many months, culminating in the perpetrator's formal request for forgiveness. If forgiveness is granted by the survivor, then the perpetrator and his family and friends, typically bring a basket of offerings, usually food and sorghum or banana beer, to the survivor's home. The accord is sealed with song and dance.



22 years later, reconciliation still happens – one encounter at a time..!

If forgiveness is possible even after killing of 5 little girls in a school one afternoon, or pain and shame of apartheid for a whole generation, or unthinkable evil of nearly a million deaths in just 100 days, then we must conclude that there indeed is a better way to end all conflicts. However long, whatever the hurt - forgiving is the only path to solace or lasting peace.

Just like the above examples of forgiveness at a community and national level, history is also full of individuals who have chosen the path of forgiveness instead of animosity and revenge.

The 2014 Nobel Peace prize co-winner, **Malala Yousafzai**, lived in the Swat Valley, an area in Pakistan where the Taliban



had taken control and imposed its strict ideology of no music, no visible women, and especially no girls in school. On October 9, 2012, Malala rode the bus to school just like any other child. However, two men

stopped and boarded the bus, demanding Malala to identify herself. And right after that, the men fired shots at Malala and three other girls on the bus. The reason for this violence was simply because she had defied their rules and refused to stay silent on the topic of education for girls.

Even though the Talibs tried to kill her, she did not want to retaliate against them. In her speech at the UN, she said "I do not even hate the Talib who shot me. Even if there is a gun in my hand and he stands in front of me, I would not shoot him. This is the compassion that I have learnt from Muhammad-the prophet of mercy, Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha. This is the legacy of change that I have inherited from Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. This is the philosophy of non-violence that I have learnt from Gandhiji, Bacha Khan and Mother Teresa. And this is the forgiveness that I have learnt from my mother and father. This is what my soul is telling me, be peaceful and love everyone."

Alice Herz-Sommer is another such role model of today's time that we all should aspire to learn from. She was an accomplished pianist and the longest lived survivor of the Holocaust. She started giving concerts across the Europe in her 20s and 30s. Her beautiful life turned to a tragedy when at the age of 39, she was sent to Terezin concentration camp along with her 5 year old son. Earlier her mother was captured and killed in the concentration camp and later on

Digest

her husband met the same fate. She slept on a frozen dirt floor, was threatened every day of her life and that of her son, and was given very little food to eat. But she never developed a feeling of hatred towards Nazis, always laughed, and gave her son so much love that in such a gruesome environment of the concentration camp, he felt secure and unafraid.

Alice believed that “hatred eats the soul of the hater and not the hated”, and chose never to hate anyone no matter what. As Lord Buddha once said, “To be angry at someone is to drink a glass of poison and expect the person you are angry at to die”. Alice learned to be thankful for everything in her life. She treated everything in her life as a gift from God.



Alice was pragmatic and knew that we all make mistakes and we need to learn from our mistakes. But instead people complain a lot and the complaining, according to her, does not change

anything. “I know about the bad things but I look only for the good things” – this mantra of Alice was at the foundation of her optimism and positivity until her death at the age of 110 in February 2014.



Rana Sodhi commemorates his brother's death in a memorial service every year on the 15th September with family, friends and neighbors at the corner of a gas station in

Arizona. Four days after 9/11 attacks, Rana's brother Balbir Singh was shot dead while planting flowers in front of his store on September 15, 2001. His murderer, Frank Roque was caught, tried and sentenced to life term in prison. Balbir was the first of dozens of people killed in hate crimes against Sikhs and Muslims after 9/11. His murder turned a generation of young people, like family friend Valarie Kaur into activists, who began helping communities organize against racism and violence. For the past 15 years Rana has been traveling the country with message of love and compassion, holding yearly prayer meetings.

But after this year's memorial, Kaur and Rana realized that despite the passage of 15 years of activism, their communities were still trapped in a cycle of violence and hate. So one night they decided to end the suffering by doing something unthinkable. A week after 2016 memorial service for his brother, he called Frank at the prison and heard his story of

how he was broken in the wake of thousands killed on 9/11 and a passive regret for Balbir's death without taking personal responsibility for taking a life. Rana told him of the time he had accidentally run into his wife and daughter, inviting them for dinner at his home. Frank remembered his daughter telling him the story and was profoundly moved that Rana showed compassion to his daughter. Even after knowing that Frank had not truly come to terms with enormity of his crime, Rana told Frank that he had already forgiven him and thus began the process of healing for both parties.

*Just as there are no mountain peaks that cannot be scaled, there is nothing that cannot be forgiven and there is no one undeserving of forgiveness. Human beings possess a divine gift – **Power to Forgive!***

You can read many stories like this of ordinary people that have shown extra-ordinary courage, compassion and love; in various books and on Internet.

One such resource is a website of “**The Forgiveness Project**” (<http://theforgivenessproject.com/>)

The Forgiveness Project was founded in 2004 in response to the invasion of Iraq and as a way of countering the rhetoric of retaliation so prominent at that time. Journalist, Marina Cantacuzino, set out to collect stories from victims and perpetrators who had chosen to resolve conflict through dialogue and restorative means. It is an award-winning, secular organization that collects and shares real stories of forgiveness to build understanding, encourage reflection and enable people to reconcile with the pain and move forward from the trauma in their own lives.



The stories of forgiveness on their website demonstrate that forgiveness is first and foremost a personal journey: a visceral process with no set rules or time limits. It is not dependent on faith and it is often just “as mysterious as love”.

The book, “The Forgiveness Project”, explores themes of forgiveness, reconciliation and conflict transformation. It brings together the personal testimonies of both survivors and perpetrators of crime and violence and asks the question whether forgiveness may

have more currency than revenge in an age, which seems locked into the cycle of conflict.

Their exhibitions, events, and programs use narrative learning techniques to present alternatives to cycles of conflict, violence, crime and injustice.

2016 Jain Youth Exchange Program (JYEP): Experiences of a Lifetime

By Kamalesh Mehta



Jain



(Kamlesh Mehta currently serves as a Board Member at the Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC) Milpitas. He is an active member of JCNC/JAINA and currently coordinating the Youth Exchange (JYEP) and Upliftment programs at JAINA. He lives in Sunnyvale, California. e-mail: kmehta@aspirecom.com)

2016 Jain Youth Exchange Program (JYEP): Experiences of a Lifetime

“12 people, 9,000 miles, 2 time-zones, 4 cities, 15 gigabytes of photos and countless terabytes of stories to take along!” This is how participant Urvish Mehta summed up his JAINA Youth Exchange Program (JYEP) 2016 experience. The twelve participants hailing from multiple cities in India spent three weeks in the USA. They were hosted in homes of Jain families while touring, visiting various monuments and temples and making contacts with entrepreneurs and industry leaders. The group started their three week trip in New York City, followed by time in Washington DC, a few days in Los Angeles, where they attended the YJA Convention, and finally San Francisco.

The planning for a program such as JYEP starts several months before with several volunteers from both Jain International Trade Organization (JITO) in India and the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA) in the United States. Once the dates, cities and itineraries were established by the JYEP Steering Committee, the application process began. From over 400 applicants, the candidates were interviewed and the final twelve participants were selected.

Each city visit included special monuments and museums visits with art/culture unique to that city. Some highlights include a Broadway show, time with local business leaders, community volunteers and visits to Jain centers. The JYEP group members were hosted by local families in each city and bonds created spreading across oceans will last a lifetime. Participant Urvish Mehta said, “The host family, in each of the cities, became our second set of parents in just five days of togetherness. It was as if we have known them since eternity.” He went on to say, “The conversations we had with the host families were as enthralling as the bridges and monuments we visited.”



United Nations, New York



Union Station, Washington DC



Cambodian Buddhist Temple, Washington DC

Visits to various places in each city were made possible through the hard work of local Jain center volunteers and city coordinators. In NYC, participants visited the United Nations, the Empire State Building, attended A YJP event, toured New York University and spent time with financial institutions and local business leaders. They also visited Siddhachalam in New Jersey. Some of the activities in Washington DC included touring the National Air and Space Museum, visiting the US Mint, dialogues with Interfaith organizations and a night time tour of monuments. The excitement and learning continued as the group traveled to the West Coast landing in Los Angeles. In LA, the JYEP 2016 participants experienced a Fourth of July fireworks show, Universal Studios and four days at the YJA Convention. After an enriching and exhilarating few days in Los Angeles, the group arrived in San Francisco before heading back home. At this final stop in the USA, participants spent time interacting with the Jain Center of Northern California, visiting Facebook and Google headquarters, Tesla factory, hiking, and touring Stanford University's campus.

Digest



Unioversal Studios, Los Angeles



TESLA Manufacturing Fremont, California



Jain Center Of Northen California, Milpitas

The JYEP participants are fostering friendships and experiences with lasting impressions enabling them to be living examples of the Jain Way of Life.

JYEP 2016 participant Richa Lunia talked in detail about her experience: “10th July 2016 - Day 23: This date marked the end of our JYEP 2016. As is rightly said, “Every ending is just another beginning”...now is the time to implement the learnings. This trip of US was super amazing, fantastic, stupendous and marvelous. (I am short of words to express my feelings)...A right combination of learning and fun, this was THE BEST trip...made 11 friends for life, got to interact with so many people, stayed with awesome people (the love, care and affection by host families never made me feel away from home)...now I have a big family in US... visiting the Jain Centres at New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles and San Francisco was so wonderful, the sightseeing, monuments, museums, skyscrapers, company visits, the meetings, discussions and dialogues, the YJA convention, etc...each and every moment spent here was superb...the lessons of life from great legends was so inspiring... in short, taking back home, loads and loads of beautiful memories, (and obviously GBs of photos :P), lessons to implement and being an “Agent of Change.” Thank you to each and every one (The JAINA team USA and JITO team India, host families, city coordinators, and all those who were involved directly or indirectly in making this program an amazing one.”

For the second year, JAINA partnered with JITO to provide the opportunity for future Jain leaders to explore the world through the eyes of Jain leaders. Past JAINA president, Dr. Su-shil Jain had this to say about the JYEP Program, “The JAINA Youth Leadership Program prepares the next generation of Jain leaders to engage in the key issues facing the global Jain community. JYEP empowers youth leaders to shape the conversation on today’s critical domestic and international issues by reaching out to diplomats, opinion makers, and young leaders of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. I believe that the younger generation is increasingly shaping public opinion and policy around the world and that it is vital that Jain voices participate in the conversation. Strong collaborations equip young Jain leaders to stand at the forefront of this engagement and to be global agents of change.”



Attending YJA Convention in Los Angeles

Thanks to the JYEP Steering committee which includes members from JAINA in North America and JITO in India, the city coordinators, team captains, host families, tour guides, and countless volunteers who made YJEP 2016 successful and memorable!

As JYEP continues to build on its success with participants from India to the USA, we are also working very diligently to expand the program to include a group from North America to India. Please continue to check www.jaina.org/jyep for updates and JAINA publications for application deadlines.

For more information about the JYEP program or to find out about ways you can become involved, please email:

jyep@jaina.org

JITO "G2G-Going Global" Conference Connect-Collaborate-innovate: US Initiate Launched

By Kamallesh Mehta



Jain

The second 'G2G-Going Global' 2016 conference was held at Santa Clara Marriott, Santa Clara, California, on September 17th & 18th, 2016. The conference was organized by Jain International Trade Organization (JITO) (www.jito.org) in association with Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC) (www.jcnc.org), and Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA) (www.jaina.org).

The G2G (Good-to-Great) Going Global Initiative is dedicated towards fostering entrepreneurship and providing an opportunity of global networking to its members. It provides members with opportunities for interaction with companies, thought-leaders, and industry experts who have made a meteoric rise in the corporate world.

This conference has continued a tradition of creating an international business and networking environment, bringing together more than 275 participants representing different interdisciplinary groups of professionals from India and the United States of America. The inauguration ceremony took place in the honorable presence of Mr. John Chambers, Executive Chairman of Cisco Systems and Chairman of US India Business Council (USIBC) and Professor Dipak C. Jain, Director (Dean) of Sasin Graduate Institute & Former Dean INSEAD & Kellogg School of Management. Several special dignitaries joining this ceremony were Mr. Rakeshh Mehta, President JITO, Mr. Prem Jain, former President JAINA and Ex-SVP Cisco Systems, Mr. Ashok Domadia, President JAINA, Mr. Nitin Shah, Chairman JCNC, Mr. Satish Parakh Chairman G2G, Mr. Gautam Oswal, Co-Chairman G2G, and several very special guests.



G2G-Going Global Conference: Inaugural Ceremony

The tone of the conference was set during the opening remarks by Mr. Satish Parakh, and Mr. Prem Jain, emphasizing the need for developing in-depth relationships among businesses, professionals, entrepreneurs, and venture capitalists residing in India and the United States. Throughout the two days, more than forty experts in different fields, representing both countries, shared their knowledge, experience, and passion, with the attendees of this unique conference, the only such conference organized in the US recently.

Mr. John Chambers delivered the keynote speech by asking attendees to "Imagine what the next thirty years are going to bring?" He continued, saying the fast innovation is still driving every industry, enabled by Fast IT." Additionally he emphasized that the Internet of Everything (IoE) presents unprecedented opportunities for countries, cities, and companies all around the globe.

Chambers concluded his keynote address by stating that over the next decade, the IoE will deliver \$19T of value to individuals, businesses, and countries, and digital transformation will be driving "BIG Change." At the conclusion of his remarks, attendees enjoyed a photo session opportunity with him.

New business model recipes and ingredients were shared by Professor Dipak Jain, PhD on evolution and new drivers of global growth. Dr. Jain raised some note-worthy and thought provoking examples in his presentation, including how the airline business evolved from selling tickets to miles; selling books to chapters in education business; from News to Views in the newspaper industry; billing by hour to billing by impact in the legal industry. Dr. Jain concluded by expressing that the global leadership must be "humanizing business by recognizing that the Jain values are the key source of differentiation and value creation."

"Every process, every person, every experience, goes digital. Everything that can be connected is a pulse on the Internet. Security is a nonstop priority every minute of every day".

~ John Chambers,
Executive Chairman, Cisco Systems

"Knowledge comes from analysis and wisdom comes from synthesis" and it's important that we connect the "dots".

~ Professor Dipak C. Jain,
Director (Dean) of Sasin Institute

The G2G Conference hosted many focused sessions with well-known local and international business/technology leaders who exemplify building large scale companies and champion investment philosophies. Some of these impactful speakers were Mr. Vinod Dham, Father of the Pentium Chip, who shared his journey of developing the most world-changing chip; Mr. Bill Coughran, Partner, Sequoia Capital, shared what worked for Google during their explosive growth; Mr. Sabeer Bhatia, Founder of Hotmail, shared challenges faced during the scaling of the organization and how one can sustain innovation; Mr. Kanwal Rekhi, Managing Director, Inventus Capital shared about the balancing act (Speed vs Sustaining) during his entrepreneurial journey; and Ms. Carol Sands clearly listed the do's and don'ts of angel investing, hoping and praying that it will make money, and a very special moderated session on "Billion Dollar Babies (B\$B)" was presented by Mr. Raju Reddy, CEO of Sierra Atlantic.

Digest

Several diversified panel discussions on hot topics such as “Overcoming legal and regulatory hurdles doing business in India and US” by Mr. Nishith Desai, (Founder of Nishith Desai Associates) moderated by Dr. Sushil Jain, former President of JAINA; ‘venture funding unlocked’ by Mr. Amit Shah (Artiman Ventures), Mr. Saurabh Srivastava (Immersive Capital), Aditya Singh (Foundation Capital), Edith Yeung (500 Startups) and Paul Singh (CEO Startup Strategies) and Global Business Trends. Additionally, panel discussions on “IoT & emerging technologies and their impact on business,” Transformation Lessons from Rebel Entrepreneurs & Executives” and “Global Business Trends” were conducted successfully keeping the attendees actively engaged throughout these discussions.

“The most valuable part of the conference was meeting professionals from other areas and discussing common challenges, thought provoking discussion inspired from speakers/presentation”.

~Preeti (Conference Attendee)

Pitch Your Business Idea

The “Pitch Your Business Idea” competition kept participants eagerly awaiting the start of the competition, which did not disappoint. Six business plans were presented, three from the US and three from India. The venture capitalist judges panel was comprised of men and women of diverse backgrounds – Mr. Amit Shah (Artiman Ventures), Ms. Edith Yeung (500 Startups), Mr. Salil Pradhan (Draper Nexus Venture), Mr. Ankur Jain (Inclusive Capital), and Mr. Sean Schantzen (HealthFundr). The judges provided candid feedback to each entrepreneur on their business plans, identifying tough business questions, and finally selecting the top three. These three were Mr. Hardik Gandhi (Twigme), Mr. Namit Jain (OnnBikes), and Mr. Himmath Jain (MeltingPot).



G2G-Going Global Conference: “Pitch Your Business Idea” Competition Winners

Networking Dinners

Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC) invited all participants and speakers for dinner on Saturday, September 17th at the Jain temple (Milpitas), resulting in networking opportunities with JCNC leadership and membership. Another outstanding dinner was on Sunday, September 18th, with the “The Indus Entrepreneurship, Silicon Valley” (TIE) where participants were provided the opportunity to meet and share about their businesses with more than 100 TIE’s chartered members. Once again Mr. Rakeshh Mehta, President JITO, addressed the audience by welcoming the partnership effort. Mr. Venk Shukla, Chairman TIE, shared the TIE vision and how it operates globally. He continued by welcoming JITO members to encourage the business exchange globally, and he offered to help make it happen.

Launch of JITO US Initiative

As result of this conference in San Francisco, JITO is now opening a new chapter in USA. The professional & business opportunities in India, USA, and around the globe will be explored and industry wise B2B group meetings & group visits to relevant locations including sector wise meetings shall be arranged with respective authorities for the sectors like Healthcare, Information Technology, Diamond & Jewelry, Construction, Finance & Banking, Metal, Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals, Textile & Garments, etc. The mission is to continue creating & enhancing the upliftment of the community and society at large under its core objectives – **Economic Empowerment, Knowledge, and Service**. JITO intends to invite all interested individuals from the world over to become a united force as contributor, collaborator, and co-workers for its objectives.



G2G-Going Global Conference: JITO Launched US Initiative

Special Sessions, Corporate & University Visits

Several special sessions were arranged for participants coming from India, as they stayed an additional two days. Corporate visits to Google, Facebook, KPMG, Intel, and Salesforce were exciting and educational for participants. Some of the key topics such as “How to market in emerging countries?”, “Using social network for marketing”, “Help new businesses & their partnership with USA companies”, “Realizing Your Full Potential & Secrets of Successful Entrepreneur” were discussed by the executives and leaders during the visits. The tour of Stanford University main campus and School of Engineering was organized. A very special afternoon organized and led by Professor Balaji Prabhakar, Electrical Engineering, and Computer Science at Stanford University. Presentations on current technology innovations and research like BIG Data, and detailed description of innovative and extensive labs, were shared by several professors and executive directors.

Overall, participants were busy networking, learning, and discovering many new things during their visits to Silicon Valley companies and enjoyed mouth-watering and delicious food at different locations.

Continues on page 21



Convener's message

Gunvant Shah, Convener, JAINA Convention 2017



The JAINA Convener, JAINA Convention Board and JAINA Executive Committee members are pleased to extend our heartiest invitation to you, your family and friends to attend the 19th Biennial JAINA Convention, a premier event bringing the Jain Community and their friends together in Edison, New Jersey from June 30th to July 4, 2017. We anticipate well over 6,000 participants in this upcoming convention. To support us by becoming a Mahasanghpati or Sanghpati, please contact convener2017@jaina.org.

The theme for the 2017 convention is: “**Jainism and Science**”. Many spiritual dignitaries, scientists, and professionals will showcase how Jain principles, values and heritage have numerous links to science. They will elaborate on the ways in which Jainism had an understanding of today's environmental challenges, and of science, centuries ago.

We have planned a wide variety of programs, including lectures, panel discussions, and interactive sessions with dignitaries and scholars from all over the world. The sessions are designed to be informative, inspiring, affirming, enriching, enhancing and entertaining! There will be Youth (ages 6-23) programs, Young Jain Professionals (YJP) programs, Jain Academic Bowl, Jains Got Talent, Jain Milan, and more.

Families with children and young adults of all ages will have fabulous opportunities to experience our heritage and network. Separate programs are planned for Jain Milan (Ages 21-42), Young Jain Professionals - YJP (Ages 24-42), Youth Activities (Ages 14-23) and Kids' Club (Ages 6-13).

This will also be a great opportunity for family and community reunions and professional networking. NY, NJ and Philadelphia have lot to offer and are excellent vacation areas. Tours of local derasars and the Siddhachalam Tirth are under consideration. The Welcome Program will also include performances and information from the local Jain centers.

We have extensive plans in place to make everyone's stay at JAINA as pleasant as possible. All meals and snacks are included as a part of registration. Transportation will be provided from the Newark Airport to JAINA approved hotels and Convention Center. More information on these hotels is provided after you complete your registration.

Our evening entertainment includes a unique musical show with many artists, Raas Garba, Cultural Programs, and the Jains Got Talent competition. We are especially proud to announce a play in Hindi, **JITE HAI SHAN SE**, about Jivdaya and animal rights. 2017 marks the 150th birth anniversary of Param Krupaludev Shrimad Rajchandra who was a spiritual guide to Mahatma Gandhi. We will celebrate this occasion with a Gujarati play **Yugpurush (Mahatma na Mahatma)** on how the teachings of Param Krupaludev helped Mohandas Gandhi turn into Mahatma Gandhi.

Contact Information

- Booth Exhibition - booth_exhibition2017@jaina.org
- Cultural Programs - cultural2017@jaina.org
- Daytime programming - daytimeprograms2017@jaina.org
- General Questions - convention2017secretary@jaina.org
- Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) - JAB2017@jaina.org
- Jain Milan - jainmilan2017@jaina.org
- Jains Got Talent (JGT) - jgt2017@jaina.org
- Kids' Club - kidsclub2017@jaina.org
- Souvenir Book advertising - souvenir2017@jaina.org
- Sponsorship - sponsorship2017@jaina.org
- Volunteering - volunteers2017@jaina.org
- Young Jain Professionals - YJP2017@jaina.org
- Youth Activities - youthactivities2017@jaina.org

Don't miss out – become a part of this historic global event by attending, volunteering at, or sponsoring the JAINA Convention. For up-to-date information, please visit our website at convention.jaina.org.

Daytime Programming

At JAINA Convention, there will be programs that rejuvenate your spiritual beliefs, stimulating lectures to listen and learn from, and time to enjoy the company of friends and family. Below is list of sessions that you will find at convention.

Sessions

- Lectures, Prayers/Stavans, Yoga, Interfaith Panel
- English, Gujarati and Hindi Lectures
- Academic
- Jainism and Science
- Quality of Life
- Entrepreneurship/Professional Development



JAIN Milan Program (Ages 21 to 42)



Jain Milan events begin on the first day with icebreakers and an opening session. All Jain Milan registrants will attend sessions together. The program will include traditional icebreakers, speed dating sessions and breakout sessions. The topics will range from career development to relationships to the application of Jainism in modern-day life.

Jain Milan provides an opportunity for Jain youth throughout North America and around the world to meet in person, make friends, engage in networking, develop business contacts and possibly find a life partner. Jain Milan sessions facilitate these interactions in as many ways possible, through icebreakers, interactive sessions, mixers, meet and greet events, and relationship workshops. **You must register for Convention and also register for Jain Milan to be eligible to participate.**

YJP: Young Jain Professionals (Ages 24 to 42)

Young Jain Professionals programs are open to young Jains who are interested in professional networking. The YJP Programming team works to strengthen connections among young Jains through professional, social and spiritual activities. YJP members have diverse skill sets and interests that allow them to build friendships and carry the Jain religion into the next generation. YJP aims to provide interactive sessions that relate Jain theory to real-world issues, as well as workshops that connect professionals with similar skillsets. The YJP experience involves many types of activities to allow Jains to make friendships that will last a lifetime, with many social opportunities to strengthen the YJP network. The schedule is designed to also allow YJP participants to take advantage of the Jain scholars, monks and other speakers during the general sessions of the convention as well.



Each night of the convention there will be a social and cultural program that Youth Group participants will be able to participate in and/or attend. In addition, there will be a social event for YJP-only participants each evening. The YJP team is also working on a special cruise with a formal dinner. **You must register for Convention and also register for YJP (Young Jain Professionals) to be eligible to participate.**

Youth Activities (age 14 – 23)

Youth Activities aim to educate young Jains on various aspects of Jain philosophy and its applications in the modern world. These sessions will be designed to help youth think about living Jain values in their personal and professional lives, and to develop concrete skills and strategies to do so.



Youth Activities will also incorporate evening activities to engage students in cultural entertainment opportunities. The evening activities will be in parallel to the adult cultural programs. Evening activities are open to young Jains who are interested in educational, social, charitable and cultural networking with other like-minded young Jains, meeting new and old friends, and learning more about Jainism. We are working on varied events including a Jain Iron Chef, an Ahimsa Concert, a DJ Dance and much more. **You must register for Convention and also register for YA (Youth Activities) to be eligible to participate.**

Kids' Club (Ages 6-13)

The primary goal of Kids' Club is to provide a safe, healthy, well-supervised, and fun environment for all children ages 6-13. The Kids Club program provides opportunities for each child to be involved in self-directed and group activities. Past activities have included magic shows, science shows, Masterminds International sessions, shake-and-make vegan ice cream, face painting, and more. Kids' Club runs alongside other sessions, with the option for parents to pick up their children as needed. **You must register your child for Convention and also register them for Kids Club to be eligible to participate.**

More information regarding each category of sessions will be made available in the coming months - check back soon!

Jains Got Talent



Do you have the talent? We've got the stage! Jains Got Talent offers you a unique opportunity to showcase your talent in front of the entire Jain Community during the JAINA convention in Edison, NJ from June 30th through July 4th 2017.



Does your band rock and roll? Do your rhymes have power and soul? Is there a juggler within you or a comedian too? Do you dance with stars or have a singer's voice? Then it's time to bring your talent to the JAINA Convention!

You can perform a skit or a comedy routine, recite a poem, dance, sing, mime, play a musical instrument, perform gymnastics or a martial art, do magic, puppetry – no matter the talent, we have a platform for you! **You must register for Convention to be eligible to participate and compete for this wonderful event. For complete rules and regulations please go to convention.jaina.org.**

This is going to be a competition for the stars!

Jain Academic Bowl

Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) is a team-based competition for young Jains (up to age 21) held each year at the JAINA and YJA Conventions. This competition tests the students' overall knowledge of Jain Philosophy, Jain History, Sutras, Tirthankars, revered Jain personalities, the Jain Way of Life, and more in a fast game show format.

JAB is a great experience for all participants. It helps everyone to increase their knowledge of Jainism, provides an opportunity to forge new friendships with Pathshala students nationwide, and much more. In the end, every participant is a

winner because of the immense knowledge they acquire and having fun by being a participant in this team based competition. You must be registered for the Convention and for JAB to participate.

Cultural Programs

JAINA invites all Jain Centers in North America to participate in the cultural programs competition on the main stage at Convention. We look forward to having many Jain Centers take part.



Get Involved with the JAINA Convention

Convention will kick off with a Raas Garba event on June 30th – we are also excited to have a parade complete with floats on the morning of July 1st! All of these events promise to be fun and engaging for every attendee.

The convention halls will have exhibition and vendor booths showcasing articles and items of interest for purchase at very reasonable prices.

JAINA publishes a souvenir book at each convention. If you are interested in advertising in our souvenir book and reaching thousands of Jain families across the country, contact souvenir2017@jaina.org. If you are interested in contributing an article on the convention theme of “Jainism and Science” to the souvenir book, contact convention2017@jaina.org.

JAINA is a nonprofit organization, and welcomes sponsorship support for JAINA Convention events. There are several opportunities to contribute as shown in the box.

Register for convention today, and let us know how you can serve and participate to help make this event a great success. The link below allows you to register: <http://bit.ly/2fq13Fu>

We look forward to welcoming you to Edison, New Jersey!

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

For more information on sponsorship opportunities, contact sponsorship2017@jaina.org.

- **Corporate Sponsorship: Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze**
- **Individual Sponsorship: Diamond, Emerald, Ruby, Sapphire, Tanzanite**
- Bus Transportation
- Color Souvenir Book advertisements
- Cultural Program
- Evening Entertainment
- Exhibition Booths
- Jain Academic Bowl (JAB)
- Jain Got Talent (JGT)
- Jain Milan and YJP
- Meals and Snacks
- Musical Shows and Drama
- Raas-Garba
- Religious Discourse
- Sadhus, Sadhvis and Speakers
- Souvenir bags
- Website
- Welcome Program and Parade Floats

“Forgiveness is giving up the hope that the past could be any different” - Oprah Winfrey

“To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness.” - Robert Muller

“An eye for eye makes the whole world blind” - Mahatma Gandhi



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Chandkaushik

(From Jain Story Book,
JAINA Education Series 202 - Level 2)

This is a story about Bhagawān Mahāvīr when he was a monk. He used to fast, meditate, and perform penance. He traveled barefoot from place to place and village to village. Bhagawān Mahāvīr once decided to go to the village of Vachala. On his way, he would have to go through a forest where a poisonous snake named Chandkaushik lived. It was said that Chandkaushik could kill a person or animal just by casting an evil and angry glance at them. All the people of the villages near that forest lived in absolute fear.

When the villagers learned about Mahāvīr's intention to pass through the forest, they begged him to take another longer route. However, Mahāvīr had no fear. He practiced supreme non-violence. He had no hatred towards anyone and considered fear and hatred as violence to oneself. He was at peace with himself and all other living beings. There was a glow of serenity and compassion on his face. He convinced the people that everything would be all right and he proceeded to the forest where Chandkaushik lived. After a while, he noticed the beautiful green grass fading. The forest looked like a desert. Trees and plants were dead so he thought that this must be near the area where Chandkaushik lived. Mahāvīr stopped there to meditate. Peace, tranquility, and compassion for the well-being of each and every living being flowed from Mahāvīr's heart.

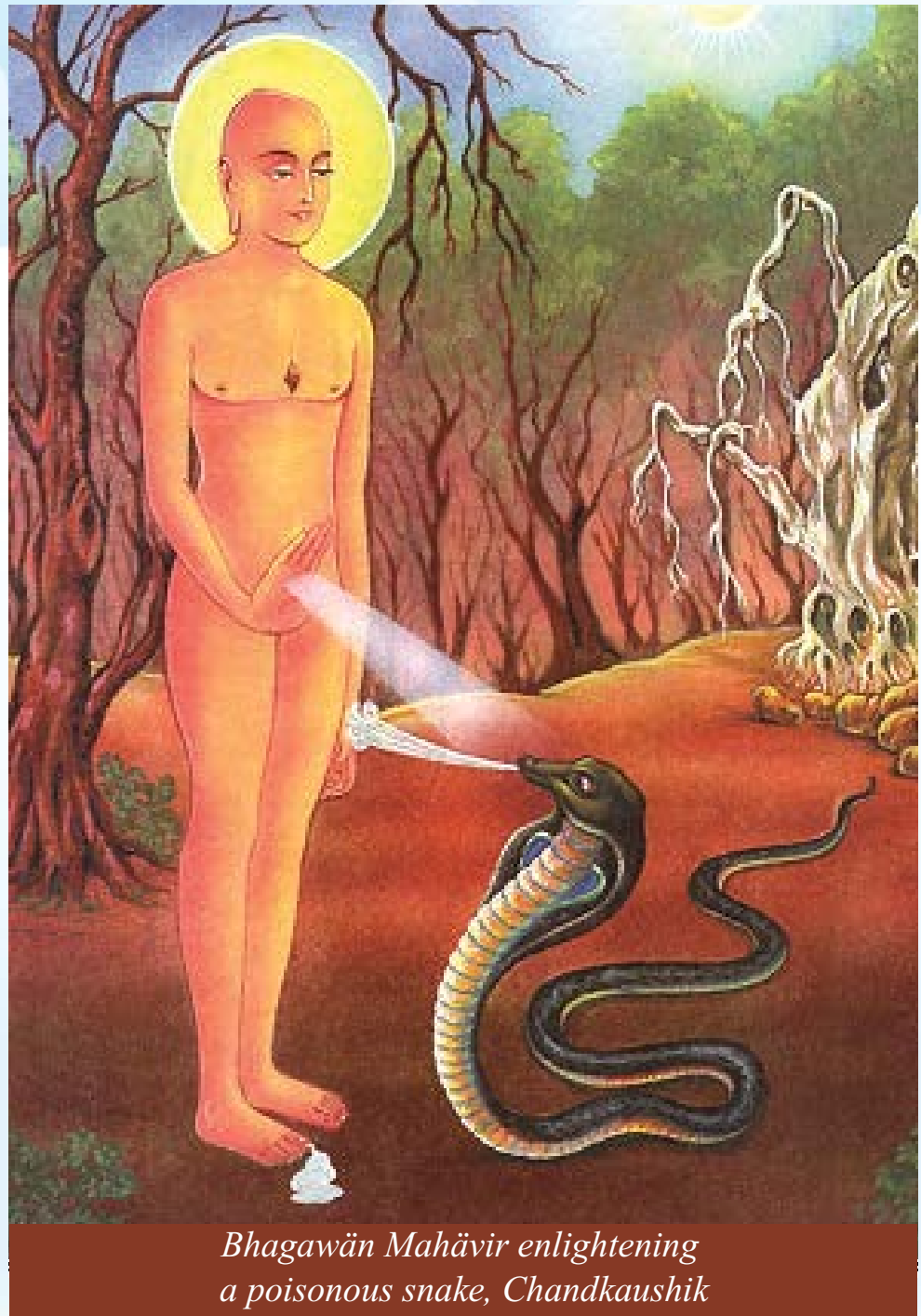
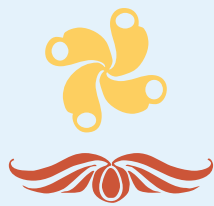
Chandkaushik sensed that someone had come near his land and so he came out of his burrow. To his surprise, he saw a man standing there. He became

furious, thinking, "How dare he come this close to my land?" Chandkaushik started hissing to threaten Lord Mahāvīr. He did not understand Lord Mahāvīr's tranquility. He became angry, came closer to the Lord and swayed his head, ready to strike. He saw no sign that this man would be threatened or would run away. This made Chandkaushik even angrier and he blew poisonous venom towards Lord Mahāvīr three times. The venom neither affected Lord Mahāvīr nor disturbed his meditation. So Chandkaushik became even more irritated and bit Lord Mahāvīr's toe. When he looked at the man again, he was surprised to see that not only had nothing happened to him, but instead of blood, milk flowed from his toe.

Bhagawān Mahāvīr opened his eyes. He was calm and there was no fear or anger on his face. He looked at Chandkaushik and said, "Calm down, calm down, Chandkaushik. Realize what you are doing." There was love and affection in those words. Chandkaushik calmed down and felt as if he had seen this kind of monk before. He suddenly remembered his two previous lives. Chandkaushik then realized the truth of life and what anger and ego from his last two lives had done to him. He bowed his head respectfully to the Lord.

Chandkaushik peacefully retreated to his hole with his head inside while a portion of his body remained outside the hole. After a while when the people came to know that Chandkaushik was no longer harmful to anyone, they came to see him out of curiosity. They saw him lying quietly. Some started

worshipping him by offering milk and food, while some were still furious because he had killed their loved ones. They threw stones and beat him with wooden sticks. Blood, milk, and food attracted ants. Chandkaushik willingly suffered the biting and beating and remained at peace with no trace of anger. He died a few days later. The self-restraint and control of his feelings destroyed many of his bad karmas. Therefore, in his next life he was born in heaven.



*Bhagawān Mahāvīr enlightening
a poisonous snake, Chandkaushik*

Moral:

Fear, hatred, and ego are violence to one's self and not to anyone else. Chandkaushik depicts this from the anger and ego he had committed during his past lives. Self-realization through the help of Bhagawān Mahāvīr made him realize his mistake and led him to repent for his deeds. This ultimately washed away his bad karmas and led him to heaven. From this story we should learn to remain calm and avoid anger, ego, and all forms of violence. We should be fearless of evil and approach them with tranquility.



JAINA RECOGNITION AWARDS

We are very pleased to announce that, as done in past JAINA conventions, individuals living in North America (USA and Canada), who have contributed significantly to the promotion of Jainism and its principles, will be recognized during 2017 JAINA Convention in Edison. The types of awards and the maximum number of awards for each category are given below:

JAINA Ratna Award - - - - -	Maximum number of awards = 1
JAINA Recognition Awards for Adults - - -	Maximum number of awards = 10
JAINA Recognition Awards for Youth - - -	Maximum number of awards = 5

The age requirement for Youth Recognition Awards is over 14 years and less than 30 years on July 4, 2017. Minimum age requirement for Adult Recognition Awards is 30 years on July 4, 2017.

You are welcome to nominate candidates by sending separate Nomination Form for each candidate **by e-mail to AwardsCommittee@jaina.org before April 12, 2017**. The selected candidates will be informed by e-mail before May 8, 2017. **Please look for JAINA's announcement and website for further details**. For questions, please contact Dr. Nitin Shah by phone (562 244 9035), or by e-mail nitinshahmd@gmail.com



Forgiveness is Sweet

By Anvi Jain, Age 12, New Jersey

*You are strong; If you can admit you are wrong.
Love is Forgiveness; If you have it, you are fearless.
We shall forgive all, Short or Tall;
Because last time I checked, nobody is perfect.
Forgiveness is funny thing, It warms the heart and cools the sting.
Accept the apology, that's the basic psychology.
Blame keeps your wounds open;
Only forgiveness keeps you healing.
To let it go and heal, it's a pretty big deal.
You have to achieve this vow, and to it right now!
Let peace and happiness fill your soul,
And achieve this goal.
Forgiving isn't weak, it's a Jain's technique.
Forgiving is a gift, it gives your life a lift.
Being kind will blow your mind.
Forgiveness is sweet, and it's pretty neat !!*

TYING THE KNOT



Females

F0511201601: Gujarati parents settled in Muscat invites correspondences for their daughter, Jan, 1989 born, 5'5", MBA in marketing from Muscat. Raised with vegetarian Culture, Spiritual & Family Oriented, she enjoys Dancing, Martial Arts, Listing Music, Traveling and Adventures activities. Looking for Gujarati boys well educated, responsible, non smoker, Spiritual, please respond with bio-data and photograph to rohishshah60@hotmail.com or Umesh Dhanki 408 410 2715.

F07141606: Gujarati Jain Parents seeking alliance for their daughter, US educated family oriented, vegetarian. She was born in Mumbai India May 1989, perfect blend of modern and traditional values. She manages accounts and business development of ten cell phone stores, well-traveled she enjoys outdoor activities, likes to read, hangout with my family and friends, watch TV and movies, learning about new places. She is looking for a smart, educated, honest, family oriented, adventurous, vegetarian, well settled boy in US. Please respond with biodata and picture to: bextavares@gmail.com, Call: 352-348- 9493.

F07141602: Gujarati Jain – Never married; raised in USA (US Citizen), 5' 0" born Feb 1980, vegetarian; Registered Dietitian. She is family – oriented, outgoing, with a perfect blend of east and west. Please contact with details: shah.shaadi.nj@gmail.com or call: 551-580- 4075

F07141604: Gujarati Jain Parents invite proposals for their US born Daughter, Dec 1985, Height 5' 3", slim, talented, beautiful and family oriented. She finished her MD in 2011 and currently she is in 2nd year of Gastroenterology fellowship in NYC. Correspondence invited from suitable match, well-educated, cultured, vegetarian, non-smoking US born boy. Please reply with bio-data and recent photo to: dsdb0826@gmail.com

F07141605: Gujarati Jain parents, seek alliance for their daughter, born in June 1991 and raised in Bombay, 5'4", fair, vegetarian, non-smoker also family oriented holding a green card. Worked as a teacher in India. Seeking educated professionals in USA, with similar values living in USA. Email: jjhaveri57@gmail.com Cell: 917-445- 4709.

F07141603: Jain parents invite proposals for their daughter: Well-cultured, vegetarian, outgoing with a good blend of east/west values. Born August 1984, 5' 2", US Citizen, BS in Computer Science. Please respond with bio-data and picture to meghajain_21@yahoo.com or call 503-396- 7441

F07141601: Gujarati Jain family invite proposal for their US-born daughter. She is 5'4", slim, smart, biomedical engineer, family-oriented, vegetarian and born in 1987. A technical marketing manager by profession, our daughter enjoys music, sports, outdoor recreation and reading. We seek a US-born professional with similar values and interests. Please respond with biodata and photo to sjg387@gmail.com.

Males



M0511201601:

Jain parents invite correspondence for their US born, Wharton educated, 29 yr old , 6.1" tall son. He is Vegetarian, non smoker, health conscious, family oriented with a blend of traditional jain/indian values and western values and is looking for the same in the prospective life partner--Someone who is beautiful internally and externally and is educated and shares the same values. If interested please respond with a photo and biodata to madhubapna@yahoo.com or please call Ajay Bapna at 310-968- 1187.

M25021604: Gujarati Jain parents invite correspondence for their well-educated son, vegetarian, US raised, 5'9", born November 1984. He lives in New York and works as an attorney with a prestigious law firm. Please respond with bio-data and recent photograph to: shahkirtik@gmail.com

M25021611:

Jain parents invite proposal for their son, US. Born and raised, 34 year old, consultant, handsome, vegetarian, never married living in San Francisco, CA. Please respond with biodata and photo. Email: mona3460@gmail.com, Call: 510-213- 0673.

M25021605: Gujarati parents invite proposal for their son, born 1982, 5'6 ", vegetarian, non-smoker, and non-drinker. CPA working for Big Four Accounting Firm in Philadelphia, PA. Enjoys travelling, outdoor activities, playing sports and watching movies. Please respond with biodata and photo to: mparikh1982@gmail.com or Call: 646-981- 7668.

Please note that due to space limitations, we were not able to print all the matrimonial ads in the Jain Digest.

For a complete list and to place an ad please visit <http://www.jaina.org> and select MARRIAGE option.

We update JAINA website ads about once a month. So once you place your ad, it may take up to one month for your ad to appear on the JAINA web site. Your ad will remain on JAINA website for one year only or until cancelled by you within the year.

For more information or questions please contact:
jainmilanchair@jaina.org. Purvin Vakhawala – Jain Milan Chair



Value JAINA Provides to the Jain Community

By Prakash Mehta, Ashok Domadia

JAINA is the largest organization of Jains outside India.

Below is summary of the value JAINA provides to **YOU**:

ACTIVITIES	BENEFIT
JAINA Calendar	Mailed free to 15,000 families; Value: \$100,000
Jain Digest	3 issue per year mailed free to 15,000 families; Value: \$60,000
JAINA Convention	4,000 to 6,000 attendees; subsidized at \$150 per attendee; Value: \$600,000 to \$900,000
Mangalam TV Show	Only Jain TV show in North America; Value: \$30,000 per year
JAINA Newsletter	e-mailed weekly to 20,000 families
Jiv Diya	Feed and shelter animals in India
Government and Public Affairs Relationship	Events in White House, Capitol Hill, United Nations and Parliament of World Religions
JAINA Website	www.jaina.org – Amazing collection of Religious articles, videos, Jain Digests, Marriage ads, Master Schedule, eLibrary
Upliftment Program	Helping disadvantaged Jain students in India
Pathshala Education Material	Pathshala books to 3,500 students each year for nominal charge
Jain Milan	Connects Jain youths for matrimonial purpose
Young Jains of America (YJA)	YJA Convention with 700+ youth attendee
Young Jain Professionals (YJP)	Professional Youths forum for Networking and sharing Jain values
Partnership with JITO	Youth Exchange Programs and Entrepreneurship Conference.
E-Library	Wonderful resource for Religious Books
99 Yatra	Palitana Yatra for 100+ Participants from North America
Master Schedule	Helps visitors plan their visits in Jain Centers during their travel
Social Media	Strong JAINA presence on Face book, Twitter, Instagram, Blog

A One Day Seminar on Jainism

L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad (India) is doing research on Jainism and Indology subjects since the past six decades. The Institute's main focus is on literary research on Jaina studies and Indology. They do have good collection of manuscripts in their library and many scholars across the world visit the institute every year for their research on Jainism and other related topics.

L.D. Institute of Indology and JAINA invites people visiting India during January for a one day seminar being held on Monday, January 16, 2017. This seminar will explore two important topics which will be considered as a precursor to the JAINA 2017 convention in New Jersey, USA. The seminar will be conducted at the L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, wherein the participants can deliberate on a couple of topics related to Jainism.

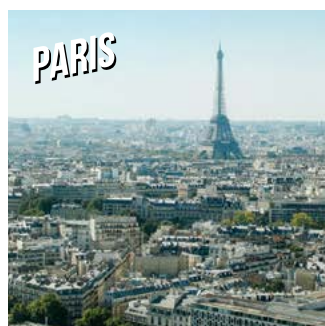
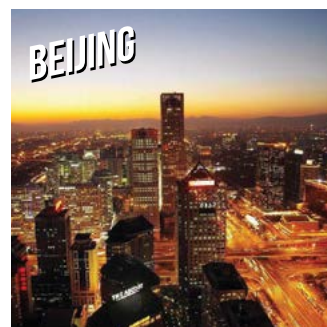
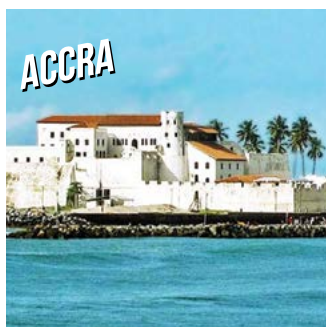
The seminar will be divided into two parts:

- 1) Morning session: Discussion about Future of Jainism*
- 2) Afternoon session: Discussion about Jainism and Science*

Scholars are invited to present their views on these topics. Interested JAINA officers and members are invited to partake in the deliberations and make it more meaningful.

*The venue: L.D. Institute of Indology
Near Gujarat University Bus Stand, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009 (India)*

For more information, please contact Dr. Jitendra Shah at 91 79 2630 2463



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