

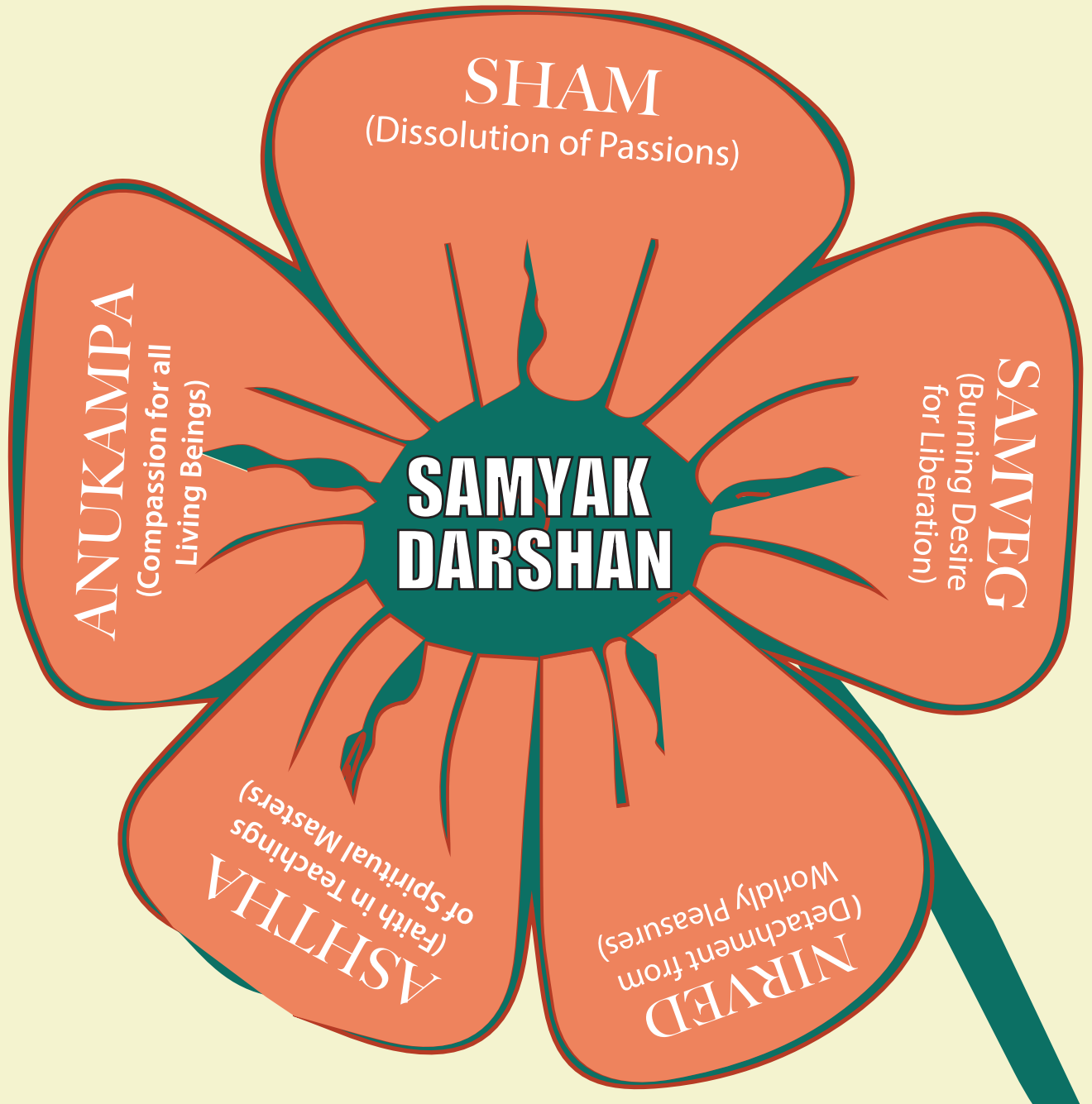
FEBRUARY 2019
JAINA's Quaterly Publication

JainDigest

Volume 10



A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America



Five Attributes of Samyak Darshan



JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the
Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)
email: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

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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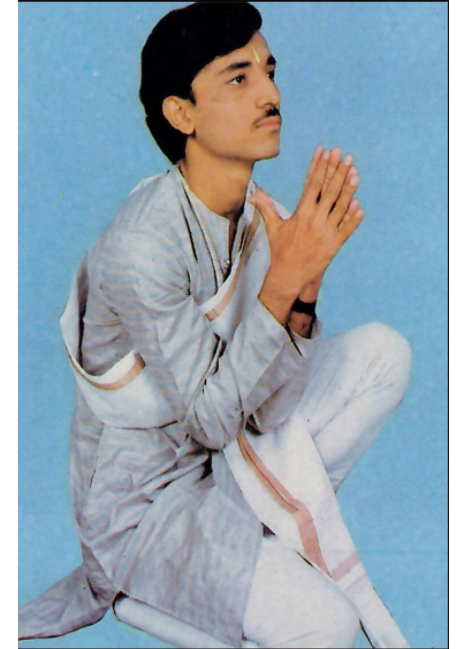
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Editor's Note



Om Shri Veetragey Namah
Jai Jinendra,

It gives me great pleasure to bring you this 10th issue of Jain Digest since this editorial team started to serve back in October 2015. We have a lot of rich and varied content in this issue that we believe is sure to satisfy and enrich you.

After the two successful issues of Jain Digest covering the sixteen Bhavanas, our team of writers and editors decided to embark upon an ambitious plan to write about Samyak Darshan. Quite often, through scriptures and discourses, we have heard about Samyak Darshan being an important milestone on our spiritual journey towards Moksh. Several sutras that many of us recite contain the word "bodhi" which means Samyak Darshan.

However, this topic is vast, mysterious, and can be difficult to grasp. With guidance from a few scholars and teachers we have attempted to bring you a set of six articles that gradually take you from explaining the importance of Samyak Darshan to describing characteristics of person that has achieved Samyak Darshan and then ending with an article by Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai that assures us that Samyak Darshan (Self Realization) is possible in present times. We hope you enjoy reading these articles as much as we have enjoyed putting those together for you.

2019 is the year of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Thanks to Dr. Sulekh Jain for providing us with a wonderful article that is sure to inspire everyone that believes in peace and non-violence.

Reena Shah, one of our editors, has written a detailed article about Satsang and its importance. Don't miss it!

Also included are reports of the YJA Convention held in Chicago in June 2018 and Parliament of World Religions conference held in Toronto in November 2018.

The preparations for the upcoming 20th JAINA Convention are in full swing. Read about the progress we have made so far in a special 4 page article.

We also have two syndicated articles – one from Greater Good Science Center about Mindfulness Meditation and another from Food Revolution Network about Gratitude.

We certainly hope you enjoy reading this issue and provide us your valuable feedback by writing to us at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com. Thanks !

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh

Jain Digest-Chairman's Message

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 the last 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.

This year again, few of the Jain Digest team members had an opportunity to put together the 2019 JAINA Calendar. This year we brought you some lesser known but just important Tirthdhams. These are Temples where one or more of the five auspicious events in the life of Tirthankar Bhagwan has taken place. We also included some Temples that are more than 100 years old because of their uniqueness and popularity. I very much hope that you have enjoyed this calendar. Your feedback on the Calendar will be very much appreciated.

JAINA cordially invites all of you with family and friends to attend the 20th Biennial JAINA Convention to be held in Ontario Convention Center, Ontario, CA, USA on the Fourth of July weekend, from July 4 to 7, 2019. It's a premier event to bring the Jain community of North America together where more than 4,000 Jains gather from across the world. Come, join us in Los Angeles to experience the events that will uplift you spiritually and will take you to new heights of entertainment with Cultural Programs, Jains Got Talent competition and Celebrity Singers from Bollywood with an unforgettable experience.

The registration fees are affordable Please register as soon as possible at <https://www.jainaconvention.org/>

On behalf of Jain Digest Committee, I ask for forgiveness for any misrepresentation or omission of the material while presenting it to you to the best of our knowledge, skills and ability. Your input and suggestions on what you would like to read in the publication will help us in creating themes of interest. You may email us your articles and any information that can be shared with the JAINA Community members.

We are always looking for volunteers that can help with content development and design. Please contact us via e-mail at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com if you would like to participate in this creative and rewarding endeavor.

Our sincere thanks to your continued support and cooperation.

Peace, Love & Happiness,
Mahesh Wadher
Chairman, Jain Digest Committee
JAINA First Vice President
Convener JAINA 2019 Convention

JAINA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Wish you and your family a very Happy and Healthy New Year 2019! With your support, we will continue to deliver on our shared vision to evolve and to promote Jain practices, educate Jain and non-Jains to create a strong Jain community, expand awareness of Jainism, and energize our community to collaborate globally to spread the message of Bhagwan Mahavir. It is my privilege to share with you a number of events our community has organized over last few months. Here are the highlights from some of the events:

JAINA & L.D. Institute of Indology

In honor of 150th Birthday Celebration of Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhiji, JAINA & L. D. Institute of Indology in Ahmedabad jointly organized a one-day seminar on January 17, 2019 on 'Mahatma Gandhiji and Jainism'. During the seminar, JAINA President, Gunvant Shah highlighted Gandhiji's life and talked about how he helped India to liberate from the British rule. JAINA Academic Liaison Committee Member, Dilip Shah, summarized JAINA activities, while JAINA Education Committee Chair, Pravin Shah, explained how the committee prepared Pathshala books that are used uniformly by 50 Pathshalas in USA and Canada.



JAINA at Veerayatan 2019

A JAINA delegation participated in the 3 day celebration of Republic Day of India and Acharyashri Chandanaji's birthday at Tirthankar Mahavir Vidya Mandir (TMVM) School in Palitana. Over 600 Veerayatan well-wishers from 10 different countries came to participate in a spiritual setting to see how Veerayatan fulfills its core mission of Seva, Shiksha and Sadhna.



The first day, January 25th, was devoted to an all-day scholars seminar wherein 28 scholars from all over India presented papers on Jainism. The second day, January 26th, everyone gathered around where Acharya Chandana Shriji and Sadhavijs hoisted the national flag. The event was followed by inauguration of "Adinath Netralaya" - an eye hospital. Later, everyone celebrated Acharya Chandana Shriji's 83rd birthday. There was a cultural program presented by Veerayatan children during which Veerayatan recognized JAINA President Gunvant Shah and other dignitaries who had come from around the world. After lunch, there was Shilanyas ceremony of "Pragyatirth Takshshila", an innovative school for Sadhvijs and diksharthis to study Jainism. In the evening, everyone enjoyed the musical program by Taanariri - The Musical Mist from Mumbai and also performed Garba. On the third day, people met at Taleti around 5:30 am and did Palitana pilgrimage - Pasad Yatra with Veerayatan Sadhvijs. The event ended with lunch and farewell.

The JAINA delegation consisted of the President Gunvant Shah, past president Dilip Shah, Pravin K Shah of North Carolina, Dr. Mamta Shaha of NY, Priyanka Mehta and Maitri Mehta from JAINA office in India. There were 20 more Jains from all over North America who also attended.

Diwali at Capitol Hill

Diwali was hosted by BAPS, JAINA, and others co-sponsors at the Capitol Hill, Washington, DC on November 14, 2018. The event had over 300 attendees from the Indian diaspora and 26 members of the House and Senate. JAINA had over 20 representatives including President Gunvant Shah, First VP Mahesh Wadher, Secretary Haresh Shah, local Regional VP, YJP Chair and local area Directors. Everyone celebrated the spirit of Diwali, and the strength of the Indian American community in the USA, which gave hope of better collaboration between the American and Indian communities and of building a greater bond between both the nations.





JAINA Convention 2019

JAINA Convention 2019 team released the first introduction video of JAINA Convention 2019 which showcases the essence of JAINA Convention and depicts what's unique about this convention.

Parliament of the World's Religions

JAINA delegation took part in the conference in Toronto from Nov 1 to 7, 2018. There were over 8,300 attendees representing over 120 faiths from all around the world with multitude of programs. They featured 40+ sessions from 30+ Jain speakers that were a combination of spiritual leaders, subject matter experts within our community, and also included members less than 40 years of age who shared their practice of Jainism with modernity. Dr. Manish Mehta, Chair of JAINA Diaspora Committee organized and moderated two sessions on November 3 on the topic "Interfaith Collaborations for Sustainability" emphasizing ways to simultaneously Reduce Our Carbon Footprint and Karmic Footprint.

Workshop at JCSC JAINA Education Committee and Jain Society of Southern California (LA) along with YJA, JAYA, and YJP had jointly organized the Jain workshop from Sep 28th to 30th, 2018. The theme of the workshop was "Striking a Balance - Examining Social, Cultural, and Spiritual Environment" that we adults and our youth face while growing up in North America.

International School For Jain Studies (ISJS) had organized a ten-day winter program in Ahmedabad from December 28, 2018 to January 7, 2019. The program was on Jain Philosophy and Way of Life and Its Relevance. It also included two days pilgrimage to famous Palitana Hills and other Jain temples in and around Ahmedabad.

Jain Milan event was held from October 26th to 28th in Orlando, FL to encourage our Jain youth to meet other Jains for the purpose of matrimony.

JAINA Special Newsletters

JAINA published special Diwali and Gyan Pancham newsletters, where we learned about the importance of Diwali in Jainism, the importance and rituals of Gyan Pancham.

JAINA Calendar 2019

Hope you have received 2019 JAINA Calendar and are enjoying the selection of lesser-known, but important Jain Temples of India. Planning for 2020 Calendar has just begun.

YJA & YJP

JAINA congratulates the 2018-2019 YJA Executive Board and wishes them success in all their future endeavors. YJA hosted their third annual Interregional Clothing Drive from December 2nd to January 13th to benefit individuals in the community. YJP started the New Year with the new board. YJP now has over 400 members. Last year, they had 62 events and represented at over 17 cities in all over North America.

Jain Young Students' Achievements

JAINA has started recognizing youths who have achieved outstanding awards.

- Daven Patel, a 15-year-old from New Jersey, received the President's Volunteer Service Award and Appreciation Letter from President Donald Trump for his service towards nation and communities. Deven's volunteer work is focused on helping younger children attain their goals.
- Indian-American student Rishab Jain, age 13 of Portland, Oregon, is "America's Top Young Scientist" for creating a tool to treat pancreatic cancer more effectively.
- Moksh Shah, a 14-year-old, completed all his Eagle Scout Requirements. He renovated Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington's Playground as a Service Project, and was awarded the Eagle Scout Rank in October 2018.

Gunvant Shah
JAINA President



20TH BIENNIAL JAINA CONVENTION



Celebrating Jain Religion in the 21st Cen-

Jai Jinendra,

JAINA cordially invites all of you with family and friends to attend the 20th Biennial JAINA Convention to be held in Ontario Convention Center, Ontario, CA, USA on the Fourth of July weekend, from July 4 to 7, 2019. It is a premier event to bring the Jain community of North America together where more than 4,000 Jains gather from across the world. Come, join us in Los Angeles to experience the events that will uplift you spiritually and will take you to new heights of entertainment with Cultural Programs, Jains Got Talent competition and Celebrity Singers from Bollywood with an unforgettable experience. The registration fees are affordable. Please register as soon as possible at <https://www.jainaconvention.org/>. As we get closer to the convention, the registration fees will gradually go up; so please register now!

JAINA Convention 2019 will offer attendees a deeper understanding of the Jain principles and values and provide a roadmap for seamlessly integrating them into our daily lifestyle. Renewing our commitment to the practice of essential values of non-violence (Ahimsa), multiplicity of viewpoints (Anekantvad), and non-possessiveness (Aparigraha) will bring a balance in everything we do. Some of the highlights of the conventions are:

Daytime Events	Nighttime Events	Youth Events
Engaging Speeches by Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev Tulsi Gabbard Gaur Gopal Das Nipun Mehta Ingrid Newkirk Philip Wollen Acharyashri Chandanaji Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai Rahul Jain Kapoor Acharya Namramuniji .. and many more! Art Workshop, Jain Yoga, Jain Academic Bowl, Shatavdhan, Bhakti and Pujans in the Temple, etc.	Raas-Garba by Parth Doshi Kalpesh Kharwa Shilpi Paul Bollywood Concert with Rex D'souza Mauli Dave Sunny Jadhav Cultural Program "One World, One Rhythm" A Music and Dance Extravaganza Jains Got Talent Performances by the Talent Competition Winners JAINA Awards Recognition of Youth and Adults	YJA and YJP Keynote Speakers Session Speakers Networking Interactive Activities Night Activities Jain Connect Ice Breakers Garba Beach Party Roof Top Parking Lot Mixer Ek Main Aur Ek Tu Cali Tadka Evening Socials Formal Dinner

Thank you and see you in Los Angeles,

Sincerely,

Mahesh Wadher

JAINA First Vice President



JAINA Convention 2019, July 4-7, 2019

Los Angeles is Calling.. Are you Ready?

JAINA 2019: The Planning

On a recent Sunday afternoon, Jain Center of Southern California was buzzing with people discussing JAINA Convention 2019. Multiple volunteer committees were holding their scheduled meetings and Mahesh Wadher, JAINA Convention convener was busy giving guidance to many of the committees present. He was laying out his vision to the committees saying that volunteers sole focus should be the comfort and convenience of the attendees and to ensure that attendees will have everlasting impression of JAINA 2019 and to set a benchmark for future JAINA Conventions.

The Biennial JAINA Convention has grown over the years and the 2019 JAINA Convention board has incorporated lessons learned and best practices from past Conventions. This year they have gathered over 200+ empowered volunteers who are ensuring that all attendees get the most out of the Convention and in the end feel Educated, Entertained and Inspired to begin their journey towards Self Realization.

The planning for the JAINA 2019 Los Angeles convention started over a year ago with the creation of various committees and their leads. In October 2018, when 200+ volunteers met face-to-face for the first time, all were pleasantly taken aback with the energy and enthusiasm in the room and everybody's willingness to help make this the best JAINA convention for the attendees.

First time attendees can expect to see the largest gathering of Jains in North America and partake in:

- Networking opportunities
- Over 5000 Square feet of Jain Temple created at Ontario convention center where you can participate in daily Jin Puja of 24 Tirthankars
- Concurrent talks on various topics including – Religion, Jain way of life, Ecology, Cruelty free products etc.
- Exhibit Space with over 50+ vendors



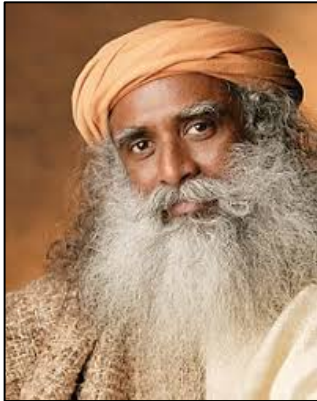
JAINA Convention 2019 volunteers at the Ontario Convention Center

JAINA 2019: The Speakers

Keeping the Jain Philosophy of Ahimsa, Anekantvad & Aparigrah in the forefront, the programming committee has assembled world renowned speakers who can inspire us through their insightful speeches on the topics of Seva, Satsang, Samparpan, Sadhana, Self-Realization, Current World Challenges and many other topics.

This year's Keynote speakers are:

- Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev - Yogi, mystic and author. Involved in social outreach and environmental initiatives
- Tulsi Gabbard – First Hindu US Representative from the State of Hawaii
- Ingrid Newkirk – President of PETA – People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
- Philip Wollen – Animal right activist
- Gaur Gopal Das – Monk with ISKCON, Motivational Speaker, Life Coach and Engineer
- Nipun Mehta – Founder of Servicespace.org - a Volunteer based non-profit



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev



Tulsi Gabbard



Gaur Gopal Das



Philip Wollen



Ingrid Newkirk



Nipun Mehta



Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muniji



Acharya Shri Chandanaji



Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai Jhaveri

There are 80+ distinguished speakers including Sadhu-Sadhvis, Professors, Doctors, Scientists, Authors, Swadhyaykars, Jain Scholars and Spiritual Guides; such as:

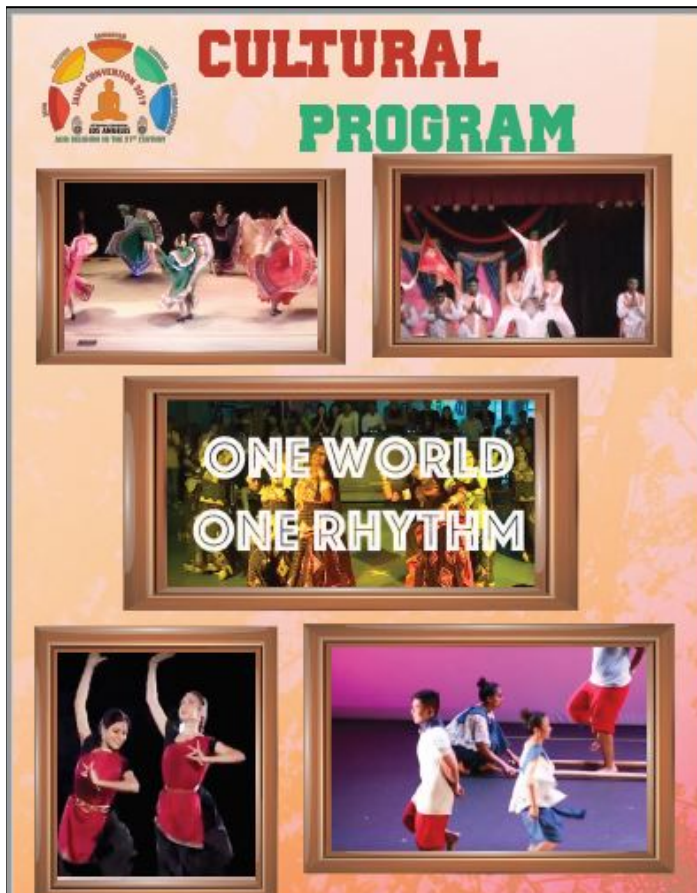
- Acharya Shri Chandanaji – Founder of Veerayatan and First Jain Sadhvi to receive the title of Acharya
- Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muni – Social reformer, thinker, writer, poet
- Acharya Namra Muniji (via live video conference) - A revolutionary saint with extraordinary dynamism
- Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai Jhaveri – Spiritual Leader and Founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur, India
- Saman Shrutpragyaji – One of the most articulate and charismatic young spiritual leader of the new generation
- and many more !

JAINA 2019: Garba, Cultural Show, Bollywood Night and Jains Got Talent



As the sun comes down, the entertainment begins! Each night will be a night of excitement with music and dance till wee hours of the night. On Thursday night, Parth Doshi, Kalpesh Kharwa and Shilpi Paul will lead us into the traditional Raas-Garba with their melodious singing. The Cultural Program “One World, One Rhythm”, will rock you with in a non-stop music, dance, and drama performances by artists of all ages on Friday night. The Jains Got Talent competition participants will showcase some of their enactments on Saturday night followed by an enthralling “Bollywood Night” show conducted by Rex D’souza, Mauli Dave and Sunny Jadhav.

JAINA 2019: Cultural Committee



JAINA 2019: The Temple

With over 5000 square feet of the Ontario Convention Center Sanctified as “Derasar”, it is one of the largest Derasar ever created within the confines of a Convention Center. The temple committee is planning to have idols of all 24 Tirthankars and aspirants will be able to do daily Bhakti, Puja and Aarti.

JAINA 2019: Jain Connect (for 21-42 years old)

Jain Connect is a new perspective on how to make, build, and retain genuine connections in the real world. Whether you're looking to make new friends, new business connections, or find a special someone, Jain Connect will be using variety of tools to get to know you better and help you meet other convention attendees.

During the convention, special sessions will be held specifically for Jain Connect registrants focused on communication, relationships and marriage in the 21st century. You can be assured that Jain Connect will help you build relationships that will last long after the convention is over. If you plan on attending these events, then please register for both JAINA and Jain Connect. All Jain Connect attendees will get a special wristband which will allow you to attend all JAINA and Jain Connect sessions



Jain Connect Committee

JAINA 2019: Many Other Programs

The JAINA Convention volunteers are working very hard to make sure all the attendees from various parts of the world will get something out of the 4 days of spiritual and cultural programs. For example:

- **Shatavdhan** – Jaynesh Jain will demonstrate his ability and talent to memorize 100 questions, objects, or statements asked by a live audience. He will recall these questions, and even answer them as per his ability, in any order or sequence.
- **Art Workshop** – We are fortunate to have Kartik Trivedi, the famous artist whose impressionist paintings are hanging in world famous galleries and accepted by Late President Ronald Regan, President Bill Clinton and French President Francoise Mitterand, offer a hands-on 3-hour art workshop.
- **Jain Yoga** – Shanti Parakh, an internationally known Yoga teacher, Reflexologist, Metaphysician and Healer, will conduct morning Yoga sessions on July 5th and 6th. He has created a series of Aasanas based on the *Lanchhans* of the 24 Tirthankars such as *Halasana* for bull - the lanchhan of Rishabhdev; *Gajasana* for Elephant – the lanchhan of Ajitnath, etc.
- **Jain Academic Bowl (JAB)** – JAB is a team-based competition for young Jains. Topics range from Jain scriptures, prayers, and philosophy to Jain geography, history, and Jainism in the modern world.

JAINA 2019: Optional Tours

While in Southern California, attendees can get the most out of their trip by extending their stay and purchase one of the many tours available.

- Disneyland Tour
- Universal Studios and Los Angeles City Tour
- Las Vegas and Grand Canyon 3 days
- Day Tour of San Diego City and Sea World

Register now at www.jainaconvention.org

We look forward to seeing you at the Convention!

Ratnatraya – The Three Jewels of Jainism

The Tattvartha Sutra written by Acharya Umaswati, is regarded as one of the earliest, most authoritative text on Jainism. The first shlok of this text states:

Samyak Darshan Gyan Charitrani Moksh Margah

which means Samyak Darshan (True Perception Or Right Faith), Samyak Gyan (Right Knowledge) and Samyak Charitra (Right Conduct) constitute the path to liberation. These three are also known as “Ratnatraya” or “Three Jewels” of Jainism.

These three are not separate paths. These three must be pursued simultaneously. One must develop the faith in Tirthankaras teachings, gain the knowledge of these teachings and then put them in to practice. The ladder to Moksh is made of two side poles – Right Faith and Right Knowledge – and the steps are Right Conduct. All three must exist in order to ascend to the top of the ladder – Moksh.

We have selected “Ratnatraya” as a theme for this and upcoming issues of Jain Digest. In this issue we bring you seven articles on the first jewel – Samyak Darshan.

Before we dive into what Samyak Darshan is, it is essential to know why it is important. The first article by Anop Vora explains in detail the significance of Samyak Darshan.

The second shlok of Tattvartha Sutra states:

Tattvarth Shraddhanam Samyak Darshanam

which means faith in the fundamental truths is the Right Faith. In Sanjay Bhandari’s article, you will learn some basics about Samyak Darshan and its types. This is followed by an article by Smita Shah which describes four types of faith that we need to cultivate – Faith in True God, True Religion and True Guru; Faith in Nav Tattva; Faith in Self and Non-Self and Faith in True Self (Soul).

Many of us visit our temple regularly and recite Chaityavandan Sutras as prescribed by the Jain Masters. However, very few understand the meaning of the sutras being recited. Many of us don’t even realize that we are asking Bhagwan to bestow us with Samyak Darshan! Learn about where “Bodhi” appears in these sutras and what you are asking for, by reading the article “Chaityavandan Sutras and Samyak Darshan” by Dr Pravin Shah.

In order for us to make the spiritual progress towards Samyak Darshan, it is necessary to develop five attributes – *Sham, Samveg, Nirved, Ashtha and Aukampa*.- as shown on the cover of this magazine. Samani Dr Suyahsnidhiji explains these five attributes and their importance.

A person that has achieved Samyak Darshan is called “Samyak Drashti”. Such a person exhibits eight characteristics. Dilip Shah describes these characteristics in the article “Eight Characteristics of Samyak Drashti”.

At times, we give up on our quest for spiritual elevation by thinking that these times are bad and it is difficult reach such a high state as Samyak Darshan. In the article “Is Self Realization Possible in the Present Times?” Pujya Gurudevshri Rakesh-bhai assures us that it is possible, advises us not to wait for better times and make the best of the present times.

We hope you get a good basic understanding of Samyak Darshan and its various aspects with these articles and are inspired to learn more about these topics through our scriptures and from the learned. We apologize for any errors or omissions and ask for your forgiveness.

In the upcoming issues we will bring you articles about Samyak Gyan and Samyak Charitra.

If you have any suggestions for other topics that you would like to see covered in Jain Digest, please write to us at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com.



Importance of Samyak Darshan

By Anop R. Vora, Rochester, NY

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

Naysar was son of a wood cutter who did not have any scriptural knowledge when he encountered the wandering Jain monks for the first time. He possessed a compassionate heart and deep respect for the ascetics. He offered them food and displayed profound humility towards them. He listened to their sermon with a pure heart as he guided them out of the forest and experienced an inner change in this process and the lightening of Samyak Darshan (Right Perception) struck! It was the lightening that guided him until he became Lord Mahavir after only 26 more births. His innocence, open mindedness, pure feelings and faith in the words of the monks proved to be an excellent fertile ground for the spiritual seed planted by them; only to blossom into a full-blown tree in Mahavir's life. Although he did not realize the full potential until he became Mahavir, his first step was a turning point. Naysar's example proves that even when one gets a glimpse of Samyak Darshan for a short duration, he or she starts the beginning of an end of the journey from that auspicious moment. Our scriptures tell us Samyak Darshan shortens the time frame to achieve Moksha (liberation) from millions of years to just a few lives.

Many of us who have been brought up in the Jain tradition have heard the term "Samyak Darshan" or its equivalent (Samkit, Samyaktva, Bodhi etc.) quite often while listening to the monks or to our parents, or while reciting prayers or hymns or while reading the religious books. They all contain one central message: Until we succeed in acquiring the virtuous soul state called "Samyak Darshan", there can be no liberation. Nothing in life is as important as achieving this important goal.

Judging from the width and depth of thought that has been given to this topic by Jain seers over many centuries, it appears that they have held it in high esteem and treated it as the most important pursuit of human life. They have asserted very emphatically that since it puts the soul on the path of liberation for the first time, it must be looked upon as a very valuable spiritual achievement. Because of its very high significance, they have described it in metaphors such as dawn before sunrise, lightening, sudden glimpse of self

realization, swift flash of insight, spiritual awakening etc. and regarded it as an indicator of inner spiritual transformation. They have said that without its presence, scriptural knowledge remains merely the information in one's memory bank; neither does this knowledge nor conduct transforms into the instruments of liberation. With it, one's knowledge becomes Samyak Gyān (Right Knowledge) leading eventually to Samyak Chāritra (Right Conduct) and finally to liberation. This is the reason why our seers keep asking us to make genuine effort to get Samyak Darshan in this life without wasting even a single moment.

Studying the scriptures, performing rituals, and listening to the sermons are useful steps to get to the initial stage of Samyak Darshan but not sufficient. Until we have clarity about the fundamental truths and unwavering faith in what was enunciated by our learned seers, our superficial scriptural knowledge and other religious activities provide only a limited benefit. Once the truth is known, the vision is clear, and the conviction is there, other things start falling in place. Perhaps this can be better understood through the example of a potter who has a diamond in his possession but is unaware of its worth because he is regarding it as just a stone. When he finds out the truth about what he has, its nature and value, and believes in it, his behavior and his actions change naturally and for good. In other words, once his vision and his belief are straight and he has realized the true value, he starts doing the right things.

In the same manner, once Samyak Drashti is obtained, one becomes clear about his goal or focus in life and then the right conduct falls in place. The clarity of "What" leads to the knowledge of "How" which in turn leads to the "right actions". This is also the beginning of getting close NEEJ SWAROOP (our inner nature) and enjoy the bliss of self-experience.

The soul's spiritual journey from a karma bound state to liberation consists of fourteen stages (Gunasthanak). When a person achieves Samyak Darshan it is considered as the fourth stage of a soul's spiritual progress. We should note that even after reaching the fourth stage,



the soul could go through twists and turns along the way, advancing sometimes and retracting at other times just like what the soul of Lord Mahavir did. If one achieved “upsham samkit” in the fourth stage – meaning by suppressing the karma and not eliminating them completely - he could ascend spiritually but may also fall back to the first. He could loop around under the primary influence of Darshan Moyaniya Karma (wrong perception) and Charitra Mohaniya Karma (wrong conduct) for many births but the power of upsham samkit acquired earlier and his own self efforts eventually propel him back into the fourth stage of self-realization for further progress.

When a person stabilizes in the fourth stage, he feels happy and his behavior patterns show a remarkable change. He starts differentiating between body and soul, becoming more introspective, staying close to his true self, showing deep interest in the spiritual matters, and begins acquiring more knowledge. As he ponders over the newly acquired knowledge, he changes his priorities, becomes detached from the superficial worldly life and begins moving away from it. He starts developing equanimity and stops reacting to the pleasant as well as unpleasant situations. He becomes a different person because he lives like a lotus-staying in the world but untouched by its dirty aspects.

The above changes also mean the real beginning of shedding of Karma (Nirjara). Furthermore, as the reactions subside, new karmic bondage becomes very weak. For example, even in hell, a Samyak Drasti jeev would accept his adverse situation with equanimity and stop binding new karma. The right belief system and thought process make it easy for him to detach his situation and focus on his pure nature. Such is the power of Samyak Darshan.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” More we dig in, more enlightened will we become.”

It is possible that we may not be able to comprehend fully and/or achieve Samyak Darshan during this life time. But this should not discourage us from making a beginning. It is indeed like what the Chinese proverb says: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” More we dig in, more enlightened will we become. The good news is that the time spent on this critical issue will never be a loss because the understanding we develop in this life will stay with us in the next life and beyond just like what happened to Naysar.

Another important point to remember is that to achieve the level of Samyak Darshan, we do not have to have an in-depth knowledge of scriptures, nor does it require a full compliance with the canonical rules of living a moral and ethical life. But it does require a total faith in the basic teachings and a dramatic shift in our thought process and feelings. Thoughts and feelings are important because they eventually lead to attitudes, attitudes become beliefs, and beliefs become the basis for actions. Fortunately, the Jain sages have discovered and documented this process in minute details and we are fortunate that they have shared with us their process knowledge which offers hope and promise for us all.

હે સર્વોત્કૃષ્ટ સુખના હેતુભૂત સમ્યક દર્શન ! તને અત્યંત ભક્તિથી નમસ્કાર હો.

આ અનાદિ અનંત સંસારમાં અનંત અનંત જીવો તારા આશ્રય વિના અનંત અનંત દુઃખને અનુભવે છે.

તારા પરમાનુગ્રહથી સ્વસ્વરૂપમાં રુચિ થઇ. પરમ વીતરાગ સ્વભાવ પ્રત્યે પરમ નિશ્ચય આવ્યો.
કૃતકૃત્ય થવાનો માર્ગ ગ્રહણ થયો.

(હાથનોધ 2 (20) - શ્રીમદ રાજચંદ્ર વચનામૃત)

Samyak Darshan – Definition and Types

By Sanjay Bhandari



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What is Samyak Darshan?

“Samyak” means “True” and “Darshan” means “Perception”. Hence, Samyak Darshan means **True Perception**. It is the true perception of the nature of a substance, nature of living and non-living, nature of the Universe. But who can provide such a perception? According to *Jainism*, only those who have achieved *Keval Gyan* can provide it. The foundation of Jain philosophy is based on three pronouncements (*Tripadi*) that were made by Bhagawan Mahavir to Gautamswami and the other 10 *Ganadhars*. They are:

1. *Upanneyi Va* – A new phase of the matter emerges
2. *Vighaneyi Va* – Old mode of the matter vanishes
3. *Dhuveyi Va* – Original qualities of the matter remain constant

These three statements tell the true nature of reality. All the Jain Agams were written based on these statements. Having the faith in these statements and the Agams is Right Faith. Hence Samyak Darshan is also considered as “Right Faith”; faith in the teachings of Tirthankaras. Only with this right faith, one can understand the true nature of the Universe. Samyak Darshan is also one’s awakening to it’s True Nature, the eternal soul; not by only acquiring knowledge about it but also by experiencing it. Such experience makes the faith stronger.

There are two ways by which Samyak Darshan can be attained:

1. **Nisargaja**: When a person attains Samyak Darshan automatically from self-intuition without any external motivation, it is called Nisargaja. This could be due to the efforts done in past lives; purva sansakar.
2. **Adhigamaja**: When a person attains Samyak Darshan as result of studying the scriptures, inspiration of gurus or other preceptors it is called Adhigamaja.

In both the cases the prime factor contributing to the attainment of Samyak Darshan is the inherent power of the soul itself. The soul can get awakened to the light of Samyak Darshan either on its own or due to the influence of some external factors.

Types of Samyak Darshan

There are two main types: **Vyavahar Samkit** and **Nishchay Samkit**

A person achieves *Vyavhar Samkit* by having faith in True God, True Religion and True Guru, faith in the nine realms, faith in the difference between self and non-self. These in turn help a person develop a faith in the true nature of the soul. This samkit is a stepping stone to *Nishchay Samkit*.

A person that has actually experienced what a soul is, has felt the blissful joy even for a very small amount of time, develops a strong faith in the eternal, pure nature of the soul and is considered to have achieved *Nishchay Samkit*.

There are three types of **Nishchay Samkit** - **Aupshamic, Kshyayopshamic and Kshayik**.

These types are related to fruition of Karma. Let us take an example to illustrate these. Consider a glass full of dirty water. The dirt is like Karma particles. It is spread throughout the water symbolizing fruition of Karma. If you take a piece of alum and drop it in the glass, within a short time the dirt will settle at the bottom of the glass and the water at the top will be clear. This is Upsham or suppression of Karma. After achieving *Nishchay Samkit*, when some Darshan Mohaniy Karma are suppressed – meaning not coming to fruition and are in a dormant state – that is called *Aupshamic Samkit*.

Now let us say we remove some of the dirt in the glass that was collected at the bottom. This would mean that the dirt that was removed will not make the water dirty anymore; however, the dirt that is still at the bottom of the glass will have the potential to make the water dirty. This is *Kshyayopsham* – some Darshan Mohaniy Karma have been removed from the soul but others are still there in the dormant state. When such a state occurs after achieving *Nishchay Samkit*, it is called *Kshyayopshamic samkit*. When all the dirt is removed from the glass, the water is clear. All the Darshan Mohaniy Karma are removed from the soul. Such state is called *Kshayik Samkit*.



Vyavhar Samkit - Types of Faith

By Smita Shah

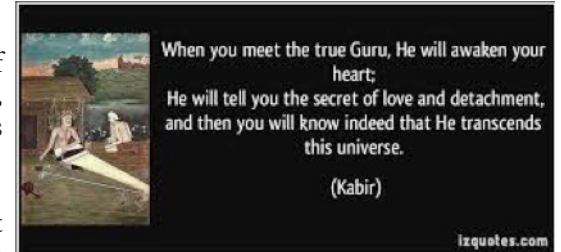
Smita Shah B.Sc. is a retired realtor and loan broker. She currently spends her time listening to spiritual discourses and reading on religious topics. Her passion is health, science and naturopathy.

A person achieves Vyavhar Samkit by having faith in True God, True Religion and True Guru, faith in the nine reals, faith in the difference between self and non-self. These in turn help a person develop a faith in the true nature of the soul. In this article we elaborate more on these faiths.

1) Faith in the True God, True Religion and True Guru

The God, Religion and Guru that show us how to liberate from the cycle of birth and death, teaches us about the true nature of the soul, the universe, and persuades us to stay away from materialistic world is considered as True.

According to Jainism, the True God is one that is beyond any attachment or aversion towards any entity, one who has achieved Keval Gyan. The True Guru is one that has experienced what a soul is and has taken the five vows of Non-violence, Truth, Non-stealing, Non-possession and Celibacy. Having full faith in their teachings is essential to achieve Samyak Darshan.



2) Faith in the Nine Reals or Nav Tattva

Basic to Jain philosophy are the following Nav Tattva:

1. Jiv - One which has consciousness or soul. Knowledge is its special quality
2. Ajiv - One which does not have consciousness. Does not have quality to know
3. Punya - Result of past good behavior or actions brings Punya karma which in turn brings good fortune
4. Paap - Result of past bad behavior or actions brings Pap karma which in turn brings pain and misery
5. Ashrav - Influx of karma to the soul
6. Bandha - Binding of karma to the soul
7. Samvar - Stopping the influx of karma
8. Nirjara - Removal of karma from the soul
9. Moksha - Liberation from the cycle of birth and death after removal of all karma from soul

Knowledge about these gives us clear understanding of the fundamental principles that govern the universe. With such understanding one can develop the faith in the real nature of things and adopt a right path to Samyak Darshan.

3) Faith in Self and Non-Self

A good understanding of who we are, the True self or soul, and everything else – the non-self – is necessary to advance on the spiritual path. Since the experience of the self comes at a later stage in the spiritual advancement, it is necessary to have faith that there is such a thing as soul and everything else – even our body, thoughts, emotions - are separate entities.

Such faith can be developed by practicing 'Bhed Gyan'. Practice of Bhed Gyan simply means being aware. For example, while eating any meal, be aware of the food, the body that is consuming the food, the act of eating and the one who is aware of all these things – the soul. In this example, the food, the body, the act of eating and even the feelings of like or dislike about the food are non-self or 'par'.

4) Faith in the True Self or Soul



Most of us, most of the time, associate ourselves with the body. We identify ourselves by name, fame, power, money, relationships, etc. Such identification is called the 'egoic self' which is temporary in nature. We perceive the world around us, our actions, our mind, our thoughts, our emotions and stay occupied with that. Gyani tell us to go beyond that and be aware of the perceiver, the soul, without which there will be no perception. They have experienced the soul and tell us about its eternal, blissful, powerful nature. That is what we really are and hence it is called the "True Self". We need to develop the faith in

our True-self by experimenting, practicing Bhed Gyan, meditation and other tools. Getting in touch with our True Self must be our first priority.

Chaityavandan Sutras and Samyak Darshan

By Pravin L. Shah



Pravin L. Shah is a scientist in the field of Newtonian Physics. He has studied Jain Agam texts and classic texts of Acharya Kundkund, Haribhadra, Upadhyay Yashovijayji and Anandghanji and Shrimad Rajchandra in great depth for last forty years. He is fluent in Sanskrit and Prakrit, and has conducted spiritual discourses and Parushanan programs for over three decades. He has published a groundbreaking book entitled "Atmasadhanan na Amrut Anusthan", which was released in July 2017 at Jaina convention in NJ. He lives in Reading PA and his email is pshahusa@yahoo.com

As a devoted Jain, all of us visit our temple regularly and recite Chaityavandan Sutras as prescribed by the Jain Masters. However, very few understand the meaning of the sutras being recited. Many of us don't even realize that we are asking Bhagwan to bestow us with Samyak Darshan! The objective of this article is to bring our awareness to the word "Bodhi" which means Samyak Darshan and appears in five sutras of Chaityavandan.

Before we get in to the details of the sutras, let us discuss why do we need to understand the sutras. Isn't it enough to just do the rituals in the way prescribed by Bhagwan and recite the sutras properly? Our sadhus and spiritual guides tell us that yes, it is enough if all you are looking for is some Punya karma. However, if your goal is Samyak Darshan and liberation – Moksh – you will need to do all the steps of Chaityavandan with devotion, humility and faith. The sutras recited during Chaityavandan will help you to develop these virtues and the ritual will help in your spiritual pursuits.



The Chaityavandan sutras that contain the word "Bodhi" are:

- 1) Logassa Sutra
- 2) Namutthunam Sutra
- 3) Uvassagharam Sutra
- 4) Jayviyaray Sutra
- 5) Arihant Cheiyanam Sutra

1) Loggas sutra:

In this sutra we recite names of all the 24 Tirthankaras. We show our gratitude for what they have done for us as well as adore their liberated state. By focusing on Siddha Bhagwan's infinite virtues in devotion, we develop "Gunanurag" or deep appreciation and praise the Lord with deep respect. We develop the desire to attain what they have achieved and pray for it.

The word "Bohilabham" appears in the sixth verse:

*Kittiy Vandiy Mahiya, Je E Logassa Uttama Siddha
Arugga Bohilabham, Samahi Varmuttamam Dintu*

To those (Tirthankaras) who have been revered, worshipped & bowed down to by Indra & other deities; those who have liberated from this world; (I) pray to bestow upon me good health, Samyak Darshan, & the highest level of state of equanimity.

2) Namutthunam Sutra:

The word "Namutthunam" means vandan or bowing down. In this sutra we bow down and praise Bhagwan by citing His 35 attributes. The attributes 14 to 20 relate to what Bhagwan gives His devotees. These are:

*Abhay dayanam, Chakhhu dayanam, Magg dayanam, Sharan dayanam,
Bohi dayanam, Dhamma dayanam, Dhamma desayanam*

The word "dayanam" means "the one who gives".

Abhay dayanam means (I bow down to Bhagwan who) gives me fearlessness.

Chakkhu dayanam means (I bow down to Bhagwan who) gives me divine vision to know my true self as eternal soul.
 Magg dayanam means (I bow down to Bhagwan who) shows me the path to liberation – Moksh.
 Sharan dayanam means (I bow down to Bhagwan who) accepts and takes care of those who surrender to Him.
 Bohi dayanam means (I bow down to Bhagwan who) gives me Samyak Darshan.
 Dhamma dayanam means (I bow down to Bhagwan who) gives me ability to do religious activities such as penance.
 Dhamma desayanam means (I bow down to Bhagwan who) guides me on the spiritual path.

By reciting these lines, we realize how much Bhagwan gives us. Our hearts overflow with gratitude and devotion.

3) Uvassagharam Sutra:

Uvasaggaharam Sutra, composed by Acharya Bhadrabahu, is believed to eliminate obstacles, hardships, and miseries, if chanted with complete faith. This is the prayer to the 23rd Tirthankar Bhagwan Parshwanath. Even though this sutra is recited mainly to remove obstacles, it also contains the word “Bohim” pleading Bhagwan to give Samyak Darshan!

The last stanza of this sutra contains the word “Bohim”:

*Ea Santhuo Mahayas, Bhattibbhar Nibbharen Hieyen
 Ta Dev Dijja Bohim, Bhava Bhava Pas Jinchand*

Oh, highly esteemed Bhagwan, I have thus prayed to you with the heart flowing with devotion; hence Omniscient Parshwa Bhagwan, bestow Samyak Darshan upon me in every life.

4) Jayviyaray Sutra:

In this sutra we pray to Bhagwan and ask for various virtues such as worldly detachment, humanitarian service, etc. We also pray for an opportunity to serve Bhagwan in this and future lives.

The following stanza of the sutra contains the word “Bohilabho”

*Dukkhakhao, Kammakkhao, Samahimaranam cha Bohilabho a
 Sampajjau Mah E Aum, Tuh Nah Panam Karanenam*

Oh, Bhagwan, by bowing down to you I wish that I get rid of my misery and karma. I wish for ‘Samadhi Maran’ and Samyak Darshan. (Samadhi Maran means a peaceful death in which the person stays in equanimity and focused on the soul.)

5) Arihant Cheiyanam Sutra:

In this sutra we bow down and pray to all the idols of Bhagwan in the temple.

The following lines explain what we pray for – one of the things is “Bohilabh”.

*Vandan Vattiyaye, Puan Vattiyaye, Sakkar Vattiyaye
 Samman Vattiyaye, Bohilabh Vattiyaye, Niruvagg Vattiyaye*

(I am praying in order to) get the benefits of: bowing down, doing puja, applauding and honoring. (I also want to get) Samyak Darshan and Moksh.

The use of the word “Bodhi” in the above sutras shows us how important Samyak Darshan is in Jain rituals. When we recite these sutras during Chaityavandan, our ritual will be more meaningful because now we understand what we are asking for! And as we perform this process with passion and devotion to the Bhagwan with complete presence of mind on each word, with focus on divine virtues of Bhagwan and contemplate on our soul which has the same divine attributes as that of Bhagwan; the divine joy and bliss can be experienced.

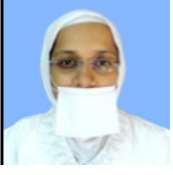
In his 21st Stavan, Anadghanji provides very powerful message on divine Bhakti:

Jin svarup thai jin aradhe, te sahi jinvar hove re

Doing Chaityavandan daily with full focus and passion cultivates a genuine interest (Ruchi and Sanskar) in the heart of a seeker for Samyak Darshan by bringing our attention on the word “Bodhi” in all the five sutras. These seeds of Bodhi will germinate into genuine Samyak Darshan and blossom into a divine tree of Moksh by doing all the other efforts needed by a disciple as discussed in other articles in this magazine.

Five attributes of Samyak Darshan

By Jain Samani Dr. Suyashnidhi (JPP, Bangalore)



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 Jainlogy, both with a Gold Medal. She is well versed with Jain Anuppeha Dhyana Yog Sadhana, past life regression, Reiki, Pranik 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

Developing a faith in the nine reals or fundamentals i.e. the *Nav Tattvas* - *jīva*, *ajīva*, *āsrava*, *pāpa*, *punya*, *samwara*, *bandha*, *nirjarā* and *moksh* and in *sudeva*, *suguru*, and *sudharma*, has been termed as *Samyak Darshan*. The efficacy of a person enabling one to attain *samyaktva* from the practical viewpoint can be elicited by accomplishment of the following ten virtues:

1. Enrichment of humility
2. Simplicity of mind
3. Conquest over five Senses
4. Adaptive nature
5. Reverence towards virtuous people
6. Being authentic
7. Compassionate
8. Abstaining from seven debaucheries
9. Yearning to spiritual preaching
10. Righteous predisposition

Like a tree taking its nutrients from the roots to bloom and bear fruits, so too a person develops basic qualities of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct to bloom in the form of *shām*, *samvega*, *nirveda*, *āsthā* and *anukampā*. This blooming is very important for a *jīva* because these five attributes further enhance and strengthen the *samyaktva*, once obtained.

Shām means reducing the passions. This is often replaced by the word *sam* meaning equanimity. Whether it is called *shām* or *sam*, both are equally important for every person. Engrossment in *kashāya*, viz., anger, pride, deceit and/or greed, spoils the nature of the Soul, making it heavier due to binding of *karmas*. In the present perspective, developing the quality of *shām* or *sam* is a tough challenge to a mundane being, yet with proper understanding of Self, one can subside one's passions by himself and achieve a state of equanimity. Most of the times, people get entangled in such thoughts, words and emotions, that they end up leading to reactive attitude that is invariably followed by anger and associated passions. If self-control could be attained by gaining control over mind, speech, action and sensual pleasure, then both the states (*shām* or *sam*) of self become easier.

One of the quotes of *Uttarādhyayan Sūtra* reads, – ‘A victory over one begets a victory over five and this victory leads to a victory over another five. This way a victory over the ten original enemies of the soul is achieved.’ That is to say, if one conquers the self, then he conquers the four passions thus making way for winning over the five senses too. This one *sūtra*, can enhance the attributes of soul, many folds.

Samveg means a strong longing for salvation/liberation. In the 29th chapter of *Uttarādhyayan Sūtra*, the explanation goes on to say what and how a soul can attain, by virtue of the feelings of *samveg*. According to the teachings of *Tirthankara Mahāvīr Swāmi* – “By longing for salvation, the soul (*jīva*) obtains enormous faith in religion, in the eternal Truth”, the very presence of such deep faith initiates a strong yearning in the *jīva*, an urge to get the self released from the bondage of *karmas*. The tightly bound passions of anger, pride, deceit and greed get destroyed. Along with this destruction of bound *karmas*, one is also enabled to avoid fresh binding of new *karmas*; as that false faith – *mitthyā Darśan Śalya* would have phenomenally attracted otherwise. By virtue of this soul-purification, achieved through right faith, infinite number of souls have attained liberation, in that very same birth and many other *jīvas* have succeeded in reducing their transmigration to a definitely limited rebirths to reach *siddhatva*; for some, by the subsequent third rebirth itself. It is said that ‘what you focus on, that grows’. If a *sādhaka* focuses on liberation of the Self from the karmic bondages to attain eternal bliss, then the energy grows on those lines and the *sādhaka* aspires to reach the ultimate destination of soul's journey and that is Moksh. In a way, in the daily routine life, *samveg* helps in the process of achieving the state of *shām* and/or *sam* as well.

The Jain principles lead an aspirant to a different dimension of life by simply elevating the knowledge-level; resulting in a new kind of mentored thoughts getting produced in the human brain. This improves the way of perceiving things, rooting-out the distortions of mind and Soul, that were earlier caused due to the presence of false faith – *mitthyā darśana śalya*.

Nirved means formation of an apathy-like attitude towards the transmigration of the Soul in mundane world. The 29th chapter of *Uttarādhyayan sūtra* says that - ‘by *nirved*, a *jīva* develops an indifference towards pleasures of all kinds, that are available to celestial beings - human beings - animals. Refraining all kinds of amusements and recreational tendencies becomes a priority. Thereby one ceases to engage in any kind of violence; abstaining from violence and discarding the worldly path to attain the path of liberation.

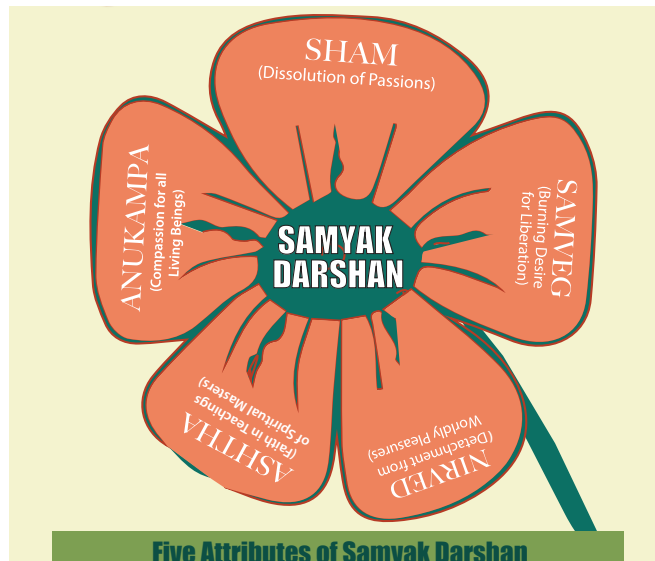
Sense of impartial detachment towards all beings as well as mundane objects denotes that all the possession of things made of matter in the Universe, is temporary, except the six-fundamental substance, i.e., the *Shad-dravya*, which are eternal and permanent. Knowing the ephemeral nature of this mundane world, one starts making peace with one’s own-self and learns the lessons of life. This learning of life’s lessons is not to be mistaken for ‘making life perfect’, but is about seeing life as it was meant to be. This in turn brings one closer to his/her own self.

Āsthā is the faith one is able to develop towards the spiritual teachings of *Tirthankaras*. An opportunity to listen to the spiritual discourses is a rare one, only a few fortunate *jīvas* who have obtained grace, rarer too being born as human, with humanity in package with it. Even after listening to the ultimate truth of soul, narrated by the knowledgeable, a few fortunate souls develop faith towards these sermons/teachings. Having attained human-birth, having got the opportunity or access to the knowledge and having attained the Right faith, it is rare to embark upon the journey to become a *Siddha*, which gets nearer and nearer as the rarer and rarer are achieved, through the Right Conduct. The soul’s journey ends, only by completely annihilating

and ending the bondage of soul-deluding karmas. This is possible only by letting go of all the previously acquired *karmas*. Infinite faith and Infinite knowledge eternally stay within the soul. As a matter of fact the soul attains moksha or the mukti state only when, both infinite faith and infinite knowledge remain in their purest form (of both of which the soul is said to be made up of).

Anukampā is the feeling of compassion towards the weak and needy. It is the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and selflessly wanting to provide relief. It is a kind of awareness and a concern for a genuine-deep sympathy for other’s sufferings. Along with this when one goes a little deeper into this attribute, another important aspect emerges forth as quoted in *Sthānānga Sūtra*; the very first *sūtra* of this canon says – *Ege-Āyā* - the soul is one. It is a deep concept of understanding that each and every soul in the entire *Loka* (universe), has innate quality of knowledge and perception. As soon as a person looks at each and every living being to be similar to his own Soul, Compassion arises within. This attribute of *anukampā*, compassion also opens the doorway to self-realization.

Each one of these five attributes contribute to purify the soul on its mundane journey of this utmost rarely obtainable human birth that one is able to attain after practicing simplicity and compassion in previous births. Each day one is required to take at least one step ahead towards progress by self know or understand the concept of prosperity of the soul. It is possible only when one acquires right knowledge and right perception and goes on building them up to infinite strengths within definitely leading to attainment of *samyaktva* in its purest form.





Eight Characteristics of Samyak Drashti

By Dilip V. Shah

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

Ultimate goal of a human life is attaining *Moksh*. Reaching a stage where the soul experiences internal and eternal happiness is the definition of *Moksh*. The Journey to *Moksh* begins when one gets tired of the vicious cycle of death and rebirth and searches for an escape from what appears to be an endless loop. The ultimate realization that **"The only way out is in"** leads one to a tranquil state and the search for true path emerges. By continuous and purposeful efforts, one attains *Samkit* (*Samyag Darshan*) - turning away from *Mithyatva* or wrong beliefs.

Mithyatva is considered to be the most dangerous and the last of the 18 origins of sins. It arises from the rise of the deluding (*Mohaniya*) karma resulting in false perceptions. It is compared to a dagger that pierces through the soul and is a cause for constant spiritual discomfort. There is no enemy, poison, disease or darkness like *Mithyatva*. It obstructs the soul from true path and leads the soul to hell.

A person that has achieved *Samyag Darshan* is called *Samyak Drashti* and exhibits eight characteristics, each deserving of constant and extreme care just as humans have to protect every part of their body. Internalization of all eight characteristics creates an aura in the person and manifests in everything he does. Once acquired, he or she needs to be ever vigilant not to fall back into the state of *Mithyatva*. Harm to any one of the eight characteristics of *Samkit* can result in weakening of the resolve and ultimate loss of *Samkit*.

Jain Agamas postulate eight characteristics of *Samkit* as:

निस्संकिंयं - निक्कंखियं - निव्वित्तिगिनच्छा अमूढदिट्ठियं ।
उव्वूहं - थिरीकरणे वच्छल्लं - पभावाणे अट्ठ ॥

1) Nihshankit: Unending faith in the teachings of the Tirthankars is needed to be certain about one's beliefs. Not being certain is seceding ground to doubts which is a product of fear and suspicion.

There are seven types of fears – fear in the present life, fear of the future non-human (Animal, Tiryanich or Dev) life, fear of not having any protector, fear of accident, fear of pain, fear of loss of prestige and fear of death. Person with *Samkit* has none of these fears because he/she is:

- Aware and certain of the soul's independence from worldly relations
- Certain of the permanence or the immortality of soul
- Not dependent on any other soul
- Accepting of pain as the result of his/her own past deeds
- Content with the knowledge that dishonor bestowed by others are momentary and not determinant of the true path
- Cognizant of the fact that the death only devours body, not the soul.

Suspicion is a constant internal dialog questioning trueness of one's beliefs. It tempts the person to consider alternative beliefs and distracts the person from his chosen path.

2) Nishkankshata: To remain self-confident, absorbed in the internal peace and not be desirous of worldly rewards, objects or affections.

Any religious activity – penance, meditation, charity, service etc. with the expectation of obtaining rewards – physical or spiritual in this life or the future life is against true teachings of Jinvani. One must disassociate himself from the outcome of his good deeds.

3) Nirvichikitsa: *Chikitsa* means examination or introspection. Not having any doubt about fruits of practicing religion is important for a *sadhak* (seeker). *Sadhana* with *sanshay* (doubt) keeps searching for fruits of the *sadhana* and loses concentration resulting in non-attainment of his goals. The person on the path of *samkit* knows for certain that every

deed (good or bad) bears a fruit and in his merit based *sadhana*, *satkarma* will help in ascendancy of his soul.

When one examines himself, he need not get discouraged by the unclean parts of his body and question self-worthiness for religious rigor. A seeker must instead examine the pure soul that is temporarily residing in his body. He must protect his body from disease etc. but not worship it or decorate it. For a *Sadhak*, the body is needed for *Sadhna*.

Sadhak must guard against seeing faults in others since it is not conducive to *mokshmarg*.

4) Amudhdrashtitva: Mudh is mithya or false and drashti is faith or trust. One whose beliefs are rooted in wrong elements, wrong guru or wrong religion does not possess samkit or the right vision. *Amudhdrashtitva* is a quality in a *sadhak* of not possessing of *mithatva*. There are various types of *mithyadrashti*:

Lokmudhta: Acts of immersion in a river, sacrifice of animals, self-immolation, etc. in the name of religion, social customs or family rituals etc. are all examples of *Lokmudhta*.

Devamudhta: Worshiping of dev and devata in the hope of gaining favors, wealth, worldly pleasures etc.

Gurumudhta: Following a false guru – one who is not a true *Nirgranth*.

Shastramudhta: True *shastras* are the ones that lead to *Mukti* (Nirvana). Anything else from any other *shastra* is *Shastramudhta*

5) Upabruhan: Constant efforts to raise one's desirable qualities by only engaging in activities which raise one's spiritual worthiness. A false act of a *Sadhak* reflects adversely on the religion. It is the duty of a *Sadhak* to be forever vigilant in everything he does. He also removes false impressions of others about the religion.

6) Sthirikaran: A *sadhu*, or a *Sadhak* may stumble and deviate from his true path due to manifestation of his bad karma, temptations by others, impressed by appearance of a miracle or for falling victim to disease, disrepute or destitution. In that case, it is the duty of other *sadhaks* to awaken him from his weakness, enlighten him and bring him back to the spiritual direction that would ultimately result in his salvation.

7) Vaatsalya: Unselfish affection and pure love for a fellow traveler on the religious path is *vaatsalya*. It is born out of love for religion and devoid of any expectations in return. This devotion to revere and safeguard dharma, four fold *Sangh* (*Sadhu*, *Sadhvi*, *Shravak* and *Shravika*) and *Shastras* is itself a true identity of a *sadhak*. A *sadhak* also needs to be forever ready to be of service to any other *sadhak* who may be unable to remain on a spiritual path due to illness, disability or his circumstances.

8) Prabhaavna: Raising importance and prestige of dharma and guiding others to religious path is *prabhaavna*. It is accomplished by providing knowledge (*Gnan*), being a good example of proper conduct and explaining essence of *jinvani* to prompt someone to a path that would lead to his salvation. *Prabhavna* can be *swaprabhavna* – self elevation or *Parprabhavna* – enlightening someone else. Shwetambers classify *Prabhavna* in 8 categories:

1. Pravchanik: One knowledgeable of Agams, lecturing in a manner that advances listener's knowledge and results in glory of the religion. e.g. Acharya Vajraswami
2. Dharmakathik: Stories based on Agams told in a manner that enlightens listeners e.g. Shri Nandishenji
3. Vadi: Debating with followers of other faiths and winning their hearts e.g. Acharya Mallivadiji
4. Naimittik: Enhancing religious teachings using available tools e.g. Shri Bhadrabahuji
5. Tapasvi: Penance with utmost rigor devoid of any worldly expectations and becoming an example for others e.g. Muni Vishnukumar
6. Vidyaprabhavak: Mastering praiseworthy skills such as knowledge of multiple languages, astrology, history, poetry, music, paintings etc. that result in admiration of Dharma e.g. Sri Khaputacharya.
7. Siddhprabhavak: Demonstrating miraculous powers used for showcasing religious teachings e.g. Sri Padliptacharya and Sri Kalikacharya.
8. Kavi: One who translates complex religious concepts into simple poetry e.g. Sri Siddhasen Diwakarji

The above enumerated 8 *Angs* of *Samkit* are essential for a seeker to contemplate.

Is Self-Realization Possible in the Present Times?

By Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai



Propounding the path of Bhagwan Mahavira, an ardent devotee of Shrimad Rajchandraji, Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai is a spiritual visionary and modern-day mystic. The founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur, Pujya Gurudevshri has illuminated numerous lives across the globe through enlightening discourses and an array of meditation retreats.

One oft heard excuse for not pursuing spirituality is that the times are bad. Pujya Gurudevshri unequivocally refutes this misconception and encourages us to attain the divine goal in the current times.

One who yearns to become free from all sorrows must seek the Self, embark on the inner journey and be Self-focused. Even after knowing this, one may not feel the enthusiasm to begin. Or having begun, one may become dejected en route. 'Times are difficult' is one of the excuses given.

The Myth About the Iron Age

Many spiritual seekers feel that the lack of success is due to bad times and so soon lose enthusiasm and impetus. The present fifth era of Jain scriptures or the Kalyug - iron age of Hindu scriptures, why is it called difficult? Unless you rightly understand this, your pursuit will not have zeal. And the success is dependent on right efforts, not on time.

It is important to understand what is time. Like soul, kaal or time has an independent existence. They have no direct cause and effect relationship between them. You are independent of time. Just as you are free to draw curtains to prevent light from entering the room, you are free to pursue the inner journey and attain realization even in the fifth era.

Both Exist in All Times

We hear that there were good days in the golden age and the present time is bad. Sons back answer their fathers, wives do not respect their husbands, and disciples insult their teachers. Why is the present so bad? But the amazing thing is that the people living in those good times had the same thing to say about their present times.

You find the excuse of time because when you remember great Ones like Mahavira, Buddha, and Rama; you do not think of the people of those times, their lifestyles, the violence, falsehood, stealing, possessiveness, indulgence, etc. And so, that time appears good. In comparison, present appears bad. You forget that these Masters were one amongst millions, and there were thousands even in

the presence of these great Ones who did not attain the divine soul. Characters like Ravan existed even in the fourth era and those like Rama are present in this era too.

Scriptures are the Testimony

The teachings of the Enlightened Ones are always suited to the need of the aspirants. Like newspapers, scriptures reflect the society of those times. They are recordings of the instructions given by the Tirthankars, acharyas, and saints in the past. If the scriptures say, 'One must not speak untruth, not steal, not gamble, not have infidelity or indulge in prostitution'; it indicates that these activities prevailed even during Bhagwan Mahavira's times.

If the instructions about cultivating dispassion and tranquility were given, it shows that desires and passions were prevalent then too. But we focus only on who has given these instructions and not on those to whom they were given. Only when that is deliberated upon, you will realize that even then, there were those who indulged in evils.

The Responsibility is Yours

The mind convinces you that 'time is bad', not you. So you take your spiritual responsibility off your shoulders and throw it on time. If you do this, you will continue to live in darkness. You will strengthen your belief that the iron age is unsuitable and freedom is difficult. You are responsible for creating the iron age for you. If you believe that you are helpless, you will become weak, impotent and a slave.

He is a master who accepts that he is bad because of himself. He knows that his unawareness is because of him and not because of the times. He alone is responsible for his mistakes, negativities, passions, indolence, lack of spirit. When you know that you alone are responsible for not giving your best, you will try to overcome and give your best.

You Have to Make the Choice

People say that because of the iron age, you have to work very hard. This may be true but also remember that the times will not change, you will have to change. And that

everyone was good. If all were good like Rama, then Rama would not have become famous. Because there were many 'Ravanas', Rama could distinctly stand out like the stars shining in the dark night. Think! How many must be immoral for Rama to get the title of the most moral man.

The good and the bad are present even in the present times. There are the Enlightened Ones so also the objects of sense pleasures. You must choose what is desirable to you. Rama or Ravana, both possibilities are there in you. What do you want to connect with and what do you want to become free from, you are free to make the choice.

Dharma is to Transcend Time

The ultimate seeking of dharma is to transcend time. He who transcends both the golden age and the iron age is a saint. He does not live in time; He lives in the eternal. He has moved out of the confines of time - good or bad, established within, resting in the boundless.

To attain Self-realization in the iron age is like lighting the lamp in the dark night. The darkness has no strength to obstruct lighting of the lamp. The moment you light the lamp, the darkness disappears. Therefore, do not try to find the excuse of darkness and prevent yourself from lighting the lamp. If you really wish to attain the highest goal, do not find the excuse of time and deprive yourself of pursuing Self-realization.

Pursue Diligently

Your 'smart' mind may come up with two excuses. The olden days were golden and these are very bad days therefore, the path is difficult. Or the golden days are on their way. Both mean the same, today is not the best day for practicing dharma. Either yesterday was good or tomorrow will be good but not today. But understand that the intention of saints behind saying 'present time is difficult' is that we must pursue diligently and not slacken.

The soul is eternal, present in all periods of time. In the

fourth era, in the fifth era. In the golden age, in the iron age. The soul is beyond time. He who transcends time abides in the Self. So the pursuit is to get detached from the time and not wait for the right time.

The Mind is the Same

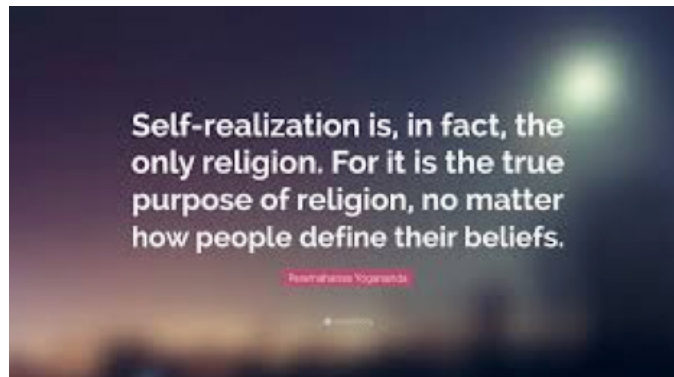
Do you think that five thousand years back, when someone sat to meditate, he did not get thoughts? Yes, there were no thoughts of car, because cars did not exist then. But that doesn't mean thoughts did not arise. Not about cars, but about bullock cart or horse. A car is different from a bullock cart but there is no difference between their thoughts. Instead of good brand of cars, those days, it was about good breed of horses.

The object of thoughts may change but the thoughts were present then and are present now. Where there is no abidance in the Self, nor there is importance of the Self, wandering in the non-Self is certain. There will be same ambitiousness, same jealousy, same attachment, and same greed, with absolutely no difference.

The Way Out

The Enlightened Ones give us a new perspective to look at the 'time'. The golden age and the iron age have existed at all times. If you are in tune with the Enlightened One and the truth, you are in the golden age. And if you befriend darkness, you are in the iron age. Do not blame the times. Increase your awareness. Choose the age you want to live in. Begin the right pursuit.

Do not try to defend yourself or search for an excuse; instead, accept that the cause of not being able to attain Self-realization is absence of interest in it. If pursued with zeal, it can certainly be achieved. Become the master of your self. You alone are the cause of attainment and non-attainment of Self-realization. Accepting this fact will not discourage you, but will bring greater enthusiasm. Make the most of what you have. Do not wait for better time. Make your present the best.



Five Ways Mindfulness Meditation Is Good for Your Health

By Jill Suttie

(Reprinted with permission from **Greater Good**, the online magazine of the **Greater Good Science Center [GGSC] at UC Berkeley, CA**)



Jill Suttie, Psy.D., is Greater Good's book review editor and a frequent contributor to the magazine.

According to thousands of years of tradition, Buddhists meditate to understand themselves and their connections to all beings. By doing so, they hope to be released from suffering and ultimately gain enlightenment.



In recent decades, researchers have been gaining insight into the benefits of practicing this ancient tradition. By studying more secular versions of mindfulness meditation, they've found that learning to pay attention to our current experiences and accept them without judgment might indeed help us to be happier. Studies to date suggest that mindfulness affects many aspects of our psychological well-being - improving our mood, increasing positive emotions, and decreasing our anxiety, emotional reactivity, and job burnout.

But does mindfulness affect our bodies as well as our minds?

Recently, researchers have been exploring this question—with some surprising results. While much of the early research on mindfulness relied on pilot studies with biased measures or limited groups of participants, more recent studies have been using less-biased physiological markers and randomly controlled experiments to get at the answer. Taken together, the studies suggest that mindfulness may impact our hearts, brains, immune systems, and more.

Though nothing suggests mindfulness is a standalone treatment for disease nor the most important ingredient for a healthy life, here are some of the ways that it appears to benefit us physically.

1) Mindfulness is good for our hearts

Heart disease is the leading killer in the United States, accounting for about 1 in 4 deaths every year. So, whatever decreases the risks or symptoms of heart disease would significantly impact society's health. Mindfulness may help with that.

In one study, people with pre-hypertension were randomly assigned to augment their drug treatment with either a course in mindfulness meditation or a program that taught progressive muscle relaxation. Those who learned mindfulness had significantly greater reductions in their systolic and diastolic blood pressure than those who learned progressive muscle relaxation, suggesting that mindfulness could help people at risk for heart disease by bringing blood pressure down.

In another study, people with heart disease were randomly assigned to either an online program to help them practice meditation or to a waitlist for the program while undergoing normal treatment for heart disease. Those who took the mindfulness program showed significant improvements on the six-minute walking test (a measure of cardiovascular capacity) and slower heart rates than those in the waitlist group.

While one review of randomly controlled studies showed that mindfulness may have mixed effects on the physical symptoms of heart disease, a more recent review published by the American Heart Association concluded that, while research remains preliminary, there is enough evidence to suggest mindfulness as an adjunct treatment for coronary disease and its prevention.

Mindfulness may also be good for hearts that are already relatively healthy. Research suggests that meditating can increase respiratory sinus arrhythmia, the natural variations in heart rate that happen when we breathe that indicate better heart health and an increased chance of surviving a heart attack.

2) Mindfulness may decrease cognitive decline from aging or Alzheimer's

People tend to lose some of their cognitive flexibility and short-term memory as they age. But mindfulness may be able to slow cognitive decline, even in people with Alzheimer's disease.



Mindful Breathing

A way to build resilience to stress, anxiety, and anger

Try it:

https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing

In a 2016 study, people with Alzheimer's disease engaged in either mindfulness meditation, cognitive stimulation therapy, relaxation training, or no treatment, and were given cognitive tests over two years. While cognitive stimulation and relaxation training seemed to be somewhat beneficial in comparison to no treatment, the mindfulness training group had much more robust improvements on cognitive scores than any other group.

Why might that be true? A 2017 study looking at brain function in healthy, older adults suggests meditation may increase attention. In this study, people 55 to 75 years old spent eight weeks practicing either focused breathing meditation or a control activity. Then, they were given the Stroop test - a test that measures attention and emotional control - while having their brains monitored by electroencephalography. Those undergoing breath training had significantly better attention on the Stroop test and more activation in an area of the brain associated with attention than those in the active control group.

While this research is preliminary, a systematic review of research to date suggests that mindfulness may mitigate cognitive decline, perhaps due to its effects on memory, attention, processing, and executive functioning.

3) Mindfulness may improve your immune response

When we encounter viruses and other disease-causing organisms, our bodies send out troops of immune cells that circulate in the blood. These cells, including pro- and anti-inflammatory proteins, neutrophils, T-cells, immunoglobulins, and natural killer cells, help us to fight disease and infection in various ways. Mindfulness, it turns

out, may affect these disease-fighting cells.

In several studies, mindfulness meditation appeared to increase levels of T-cells or T-cell activity in patients with HIV or breast cancer. This suggests that mindfulness could play a role in fighting cancer and other diseases that call upon immune cells. Indeed, in people suffering from cancer, mindfulness appears to improve a variety of biomarkers that might indicate progression of the disease.

In another study, elderly participants were randomly assigned to an eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course or a moderate-intensity exercise program. At the end, participants who'd practiced mindfulness had higher levels of the protein interleukin-8 in their nasal secretions, suggesting improved immune function.

Another study found increases in interleukin-10 in colitis patients who took a mindfulness meditation course compared to a mind-body educational program, especially among patients whose colitis had flared up. Yet another study found that patients who had greater increases in mindfulness after an MBSR course also showed faster wound healing, a process regulated by the immune system.

Studies have found effects on markers of inflammation too; like C-reactive protein, which in higher levels can harm physical health. Research shows that people with rheumatoid arthritis have reduced C-reactive protein levels after taking an MBSR course versus being on a waitlist for the course. Overall, these findings suggest that mindfulness meditation can have disease-fighting powers through our immune response.

4) Mindfulness may reduce cell aging

Cell aging - marked by cell shortening - occurs naturally as cells repeatedly divide over the lifespan and can also be increased by disease or stress. Proteins called telomeres, which are found at the end of cells and serve to protect cells from aging, seem to be impacted by mindfulness meditation.

Studies suggest that long-time meditators may have greater telomere lengths. In one experimental study, researchers found that breast cancer survivors who went through MBSR preserved the length of their telomeres better than those who were on a waitlist. However, this study also found that general supportive therapies impacted telomere length; so, there may not be something special about MBSR that impacts cell aging.

On the other hand, another study with breast cancer survivors found no differences in telomere length after taking an MBSR course; but they did find differences in telomere activity, which is also related to cell aging. In

fact, a 2018 review of research ties mindfulness training to increased telomere activity, suggesting it indirectly affects the integrity of the telomeres in our cells. Perhaps that's why scientists are at least optimistic about the positive effects of meditation on aging.

5) Mindfulness may help reduce psychological pain

Of course, while the above physiological benefits of mindfulness are compelling, we needn't forget that mindfulness also impacts our psychological well-being, which, in turn, affects physical health. In fact, it's quite likely that these changes have synergistic effects on one another.

First of all, a great deal of research suggests that mindfulness can help healthy people reduce their stress. And thanks to Jon-Kabat Zinn's pioneering MBSR program, there's now a large body of research showing that mindfulness can help people cope with the pain, anxiety, depression, and stress that might accompany illness, especially chronic conditions.

For example, drug addictions, at heart, come about because of physiological cravings for a substance that relieves people temporarily from their psychological suffering. Mindfulness can be a useful adjunct to addiction treatment by helping people better understand and tolerate their cravings, potentially helping them to avoid relapse after they've been safely weaned off of drugs or alcohol. The same is true for people struggling with overeating.

Fascinating though it is, we shouldn't overplay meditation's effects on physical health at the expense of its importance to emotional health. In fact, it may be difficult to separate out the two, as a key impact of mindfulness is stress reduction, and

psychological stress has been tied to heart health, immune response, and telomere length. This idea is further supported by the fact that other stress-reducing therapies also seem to impact physical health, as well.

Still, it's encouraging to know that something that can be taught and practiced can have an impact on our overall health - not just mental but also physical - more than 2,000 years after it was developed. That's reason enough to give mindfulness meditation a try.

(A version of this article was originally published in Lion's Roar.)

More on the Benefits of Mindfulness

Explore what we still don't know about mindfulness meditation: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_we_still_dont_know_about_mindfulness_meditation

Read a review of *Altered Traits*, a book by Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson on the benefits of mindfulness: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_meditation_lead_to_lasting_change

Discover the current state of mindfulness science: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_state_of_mindfulness_science

How mindful are you? Take the quiz!
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/4



Young Jains of America (YJA) Update

Letter from the Co-Chairs

Over the last 2 months, our Executive Board has worked extremely hard to pull off a multitude of events and initiatives for YJA. From successfully conducting 100% Vegan friendly National Dinners and Lunches in over 34 cities across the country, to raising funds during Giving Tuesday, to organizing Thanksgiving Jaaps in various Jain Sanghs, they have been working tirelessly to ensure YJA continues to provide engagement and opportunities to our current and future members.

2020 Convention Bid Packet

YJA 2020 Bid Packet has been released! Did you attend the 2018 YJA Convention or hear about how much fun it was? Wish it had been hosted in your hometown? Well, now is your chance to bring the next convention to your city! YJA is looking for an eager group of youth volunteers and the support of an interested Jain Sangh to help us with YJA Convention 2020. If you'd like to see Convention happen in your city next year, email projects@yja.org to connect with other youth in the area working on the Host City Bid Packet or to start the initiative yourself. Get excited for #yja2020!

YJA Retreats in 2019

Retreat season is officially upon us! This year, the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast will be joining forces to put on the biggest YJA retreat in history at Poconos. Poconos and Mid-West retreats will be held in February, followed by South, Southeast, and West in March. Get ready for the most hype retreats!



By Ocean Robbins

Perhaps most tellingly, the positive changes were markedly noticeable to others. According to the researchers, “Spouses of the participants in the gratitude (group) reported that the participants appeared to have higher subjective well-being than did the spouses of the participants in the control (group).”

There's an old saying that if you've forgotten the language of gratitude, you'll never be on speaking terms with happiness. It turns out this isn't just a fluffy idea. Several studies have shown depression to be inversely correlated to gratitude. It seems that the more grateful a person is, the less depressed they are. Philip Watkins, a clinical psychologist at Eastern Washington University, found that clinically depressed individuals showed significantly lower gratitude (nearly 50 percent less) than non-depressed controls.

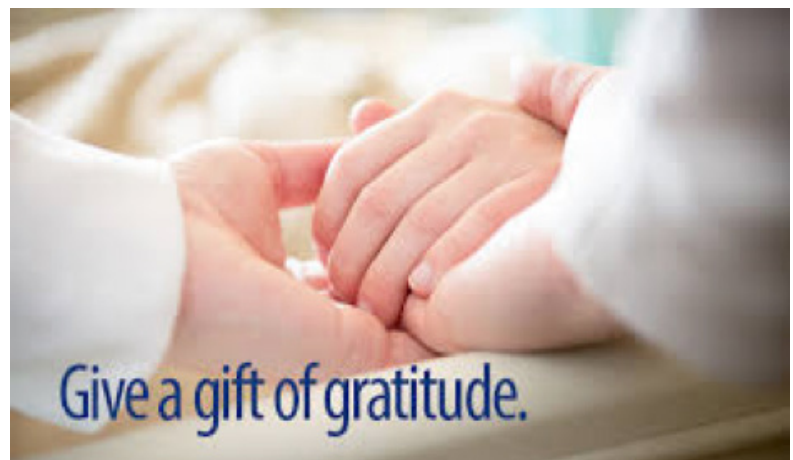
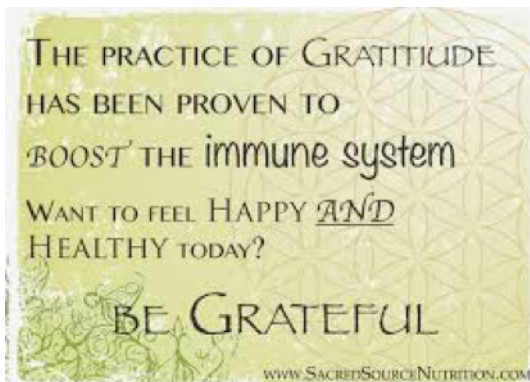
Dr. John Gottman at the University of Washington has been researching marriages for two decades. The conclusion of all that research, he states, is that unless a couple is able to maintain a high ratio of positive to negative encounters (5:1 or greater), it is likely the marriage will end.

With 90 percent accuracy, Gottman says he can predict, often after only three minutes of observation, which marriages are likely to flourish and which are likely to flounder. The formula is that for every negative expression (a complaint, frown, put-down, expression of anger) there needs to be about five positive ones (smiles, compliments, laughter, expressions of appreciation and gratitude).

Apparently, positive vibes aren't just for hippies. If you want in on the fun, here are some simple things you can do to build positive momentum toward a more happy and fulfilling life:

- 1) Keep a daily journal of three things you are thankful for. This works well first thing in the morning, or just before you go to bed.**
- 2) Make it a practice to tell a spouse, partner or friend something you appreciate about them every day.**
- 3) Look in the mirror when you are brushing your teeth and think about something you have done well recently or something you like about yourself.**

Sure this world gives us plenty of reasons to despair. But when we get off the fast track to morbidity, and cultivate instead an attitude of gratitude, things don't just look better -- they actually get better. Thankfulness feels good, it's good for you and it's a blessing for the people around you, too. It's such a win-win-win that I'd say we have cause for gratitude...



Mahatma Gandhi and his Legacy

By Dr. Sulekh Jain



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On October 2nd 2018, a yearlong celebration of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birthday anniversary began and so did the celebration of his message of Ahimsa (non-violence) to the world.

The word Ahimsa and Gandhi are synonymous and are known world over.

Gandhiji touched and changed the lives of so many people all over the world by advocating the peaceful pursuit of change. His nonviolent protest and constructive programs resonate today even after 70 years of his death.



Does Gandhiji still fascinate the world? Historians, philosophers, politicians, economists and many others have researched Gandhiji and poured out books in many languages exploring his life and personality and yet Gandhiji still remains for many a mystery and an enigma.

There are many aspects of Gandhiji's philosophy and lifestyle which have widespread appeal to particular groups of people. His wish to be frugal in his demands on the natural ecosystem, in his food and clothing and other aspects of daily life has attracted much admiration. He has become a hero for the Green Movement. There are those who are persuaded by his

vegetarianism either for reasons of avoiding harm to animals or just for health reasons. Gandhiji's lifestyle is a statement for many. A man born in the middle of the 19th century, at the height of the Victorian era, still has relevance a century-and-a-half later.

Gandhiji was not elected or appointed to any position. He was not a Congressman, a Senator, or a Governor of a State. He was not a Prime Minister, a President or a King or an Emperor of any country. He was not a General of any army. He was not a Clergy, a Pope or head of any religion. He did not build any temple, church or mosque and did not start any religion. He was not a scientist, did not invent anything and did not win any Nobel Prize either. He was not strong or handsome. He had no bank balance and had no wealth and possessions.

Yet, this poor and frail looking man freed a nation from the mightiest empire and gave the entire world a new vision and tool that significantly changed the course of World history! In an age of Empire and Military Might, he proved that by using and practicing non-violence/ahimsa, the powerless had power and that force of arms would not forever prevail against force of Spirit.

Gandhiji gave to the world a new kind of philosophy, that of the dignity of man, of every man, whether ruled or ruling, free or enslaved, whether white, black, brown or yellow.

He called it truth and non-violence. He called it patriotism. He called it religion.



Gandhiji a Multi-dimensional Thinker and a Social Reformer

Dr. George Pattery in his essay “Ahimsa: Spirituality for an evolving Human Consciousness” states that “Gandhian perspective is centered entirely on ahimsa. Rather than limiting to the spiritual realm, Gandhi attempted to redefine economics, politics and religion from the point of ahimsa. This is unique in the history of the world. Ahimsa is the future of humanity”

Professor Predrag Cicovacki; another thinker on Gandhiji writes:

“Besides being a political activist, Gandhi was a social reformer too. He wrote extensively and devoted lots of his energies to reform the inferior position of women and some social castes, the lack of literacy and hygiene, the widespread use of alcohol and opium and the corrupt ruling elite. Gandhi’s social reformism was directed against poverty and ignorance as well as what we call today structural violence. Gandhi’s contribution to raising awareness of the plague of the underprivileged and the need for deep social reforms has been no less important than his insistence on the possibility of nonviolent resolution of political conflicts. Gandhi opposed and worked to eliminate animal sacrifices for religious rituals, untouchability, and slavery and near sub-human treatment of poor and women.”

To the untouchables he gave them a new and very respectable name: “Harijan” - children of GOD.

Gandhiji was a moral and spiritual leader. He realized that violence dehumanizes both the victim and the perpetrator, and there is no genuine peace unless there is peace in the human heart. Peaceful and happy people do not oppress and victimize others”.

The life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi as an apostle of peace and nonviolence is a beacon of hope and inspiration to millions of people around the world. Gandhiji and his message belong to the entire world.

Jainism and Gandhiji

No one grows and develops in vacuum. Practically every person in the world is shaped by environment, circumstances, parents, customs, tradition, religions, schools and company of friends and associates and so was Gandhiji. He came in close contacts with a large number of Jains and Jain Sadhus in his childhood, studies, youth, professional practice, freedom struggles and Satyagraha.

One of the most influential persons in Gandhiji’s life was Shrimad Rajchandraji – the great Indian saint, poet, philosopher and a spiritual luminary. He was a spiritual guide of Gandhiji. During a speech at Ahmedabad in November 1921, Gandhiji said “I have often declared that I have learnt, and learnt much, from the lives of many persons. But it is from



Kavishri’s (Shrimadji’s) life that I have learnt the most. It was from his life that I understood the way of compassion.”

Gandhiji first met Shrimadji in Mumbai when he returned from England in 1891. Shrimadji’s spiritual state, wisdom, knowledge and moral earnestness left a deep impression on Gandhiji.

After moving to South Africa, Gandhiji kept in contact with Shrimadji via letters; discussing religion and spirituality. Shrimadji’s adherence to following the principles of truth, non-violence, simplicity crystallized the fundamental tenets of Gandhism. These principles made Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into Mahatma Gandhi. Thus the 20th century messiah of nonviolence was made and shaped by Jain teachings

Throughout his life Gandhiji befriended many Jains and interacted with several Jain monks and scholars. Many Jains, prominent and ordinary, men and women, heard his call of freedom to India, joined his campaigns, went to jails and openly supported him with generous donations. Also, many Jain sadhus through their regular sermons and speeches, during Gandhiji’s long freedom struggles, inspired and urged Jain men and women to offer their full participation and support to his causes.

Gandhiji not only adopted the Jain's most important principles of unconditional ahimsa and anekantavaad (multiplicity of views) but also 11 vows of conduct, pure vegetarian food habits and even his daily attire which resembled the attire of a sthanakvasi Jain monk (2-3 pieces of white unstitched cloth) later in his life. His daily prayers included "Apurva Avasar"; a composition by Shrimad Rajchandra.

During his entire life, Gandhiji hardly ever deviated, walked away or compromised with ahimsa; even during some of the most trying times. If he ever did or thought of doing so, he openly admitted and let the rest of the world know about it. His life was an open book so much so that he said "my life is my message".

Since Bhagwan Mahavir's ahimsa toward all living beings 2500 years ago and of Jesus Christ's adherence to ahimsa 2000 years ago, there have been many prominent personalities that have practiced ahimsa. However, it was Gandhiji who made ahimsa a universal household word and concept.

So strong was his conviction to ahimsa that he said ***"There are many causes I am willing to die for but not a single cause I am willing to kill for"***.

About Jainism and Ahimsa, Gandhiji said "No religion of the world has explained the principle of non-violence so deeply and systematically, with its applicability in life as in Jainism.....Bhagwan Mahavir is sure to be respected as the greatest authority on non-violence".

Gandhiji exhibited extreme humility, simplicity, service to humanity and hard work in his conduct and life style. He said "be the change that you wish to see around". He was so much without ego that he did not even like people calling him Mahatma and touching his feet.

Gandhiji in the West

I have found a lot of awareness and respect for Gandhiji in the West. His name is well known among educated people. Many schools, universities and churches offer courses, classes and workshops on Gandhiji and his message. There are several Ahimsa Centers, Mahatma Gandhi Libraries, Museums, Peace and Conflict Resolution Centers on many campuses.

There are Gandhiji's statues in many large and small cities and movies and videos on Gandhiji are shown frequently on national TV Channels. I know of many scholars who are constantly filming and producing videos on Gandhiji in England, South Africa and India. Every year his birthday is celebrated with lots of practical community wide programs. Gandhiji did and continuously inspires lots of people including many Nobel Laureates, Peace Leaders and Human and Civil Rights activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and others.



In his many prominent speeches, former US President Barak Obama used to quote Gandhiji frequently. Once Obama said "But we do not have to think that human nature is perfect for us to still believe that the human condition can be perfected. We do not have to live in an idealized world to still reach for those ideals that will make it a better place. The non-violence practiced by men like Gandhi and King may not have been practical or possible in every circumstance, but the love that they preached — their fundamental faith in human progress — that must always be the North Star that guides us on our journey".

Late Senator John McCain said that "Mahatma Gandhi is the person he admires most because Gandhi could not harm a soul, but his heart would not yield to power, and would triumph over the Empire that opposed him".

A young man residing in America happened to read Narayan Desai's Gujarati volumes on Gandhiji's life titled 'Maaru Jeevan ej Maari Vaani'. (My Life is My Message). After reading this book he wept all night. Gandhiji's mantra "You are not the owner of your wealth but just a trustee of that wealth and what is for the good of the whole society is good for me" touched his heart in such a way that it changed his whole life. He realized that you experience far greater and lasting pleasure in spending money for the needy compared to the momentary pleasure and happiness you feel after spending more than required for your needs.

Prof Allen Douglas of University of Maine in USA recently wrote “Gandhi carried on his mission and projects with great motivation, perseverance, incredible energy, remarkable fearlessness and courage, and nonviolent transforming, practical effectiveness. Gandhi’s essential teachings and practices of ahimsa are not only relevant and significant today, but they are more urgently needed than during his lifetime”.

From the central hall of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi to a statue at Union Square Park in New York, and across far flung corners of the world, M. K. Gandhi is loved and celebrated as an apostle of non-violence. Yet it is Gandhiji’s little-known work on what it means to be truly civilized that might be far more crucial to the future of our species. Gandhiji has 21st century appeal and relevance

For more than twenty years I lived in Houston, Texas where there is statue of Gandhiji in a prominent park, and the community celebrates Gandhiji birthday every year with several dozen city wide activities. Inspired by Gandhiji and his teachings, several years ago, the students of the Arts Department of Houston Community College designed and painted a very impressive Mural on Gandhiji and converted the whole dilapidated and abandoned park into a place of attraction and fun for the nearby community

Caution

In 1950s Sir Richard Attenborough of U.K (who made an Oscar winning famous movie “Gandhi”) came to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the then Prime Minister of India and told Nehru that he wants to produce a feature film on Gandhiji. Nehru said to him “Make it very quickly before people start worshipping him”. Nehru knew that once people start worshipping anyone, the message is lost and only the glory, statues and miracles remain. Therefore, it is important that we do not deify or worship Gandhiji



as the superhuman Mahatma who provides us with the exclusive, absolute, nonviolent truth. Gandhiji was an extraordinary human being, but he was a human.

It is important that we approach Gandhiji in ways that contextualize his ahimsa message, values and practices so that they are integrally related to the crises and realities of contemporary world. Gandhiji offers us an insightful ahimsa view of ethical, spiritual, and cosmic evolution and ways of tapping into our higher nonviolent human nature.

In today’s’ world the need and cry for Peace is even more than ever. The life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi as an apostle of Peace and nonviolence is a beacon of hope and inspiration to millions of people around the world.

(References: “Nonviolence As a Way of Life, History, Theory and Practice”. Edited by Predrag Cicovacki and Kendy Hess)

Jains at the Parliament of World Religion

By: Parth Savla, Arvind Vora, Naresh Jain, Manish Mehta, Kummar Chatterjee and Kirit Daftary

For the past 14 years, the JAINA Interfaith Committee has represented Jainism in four Parliaments of World Religions Conferences. This year was no different. Jain delegation took part in the conference in Toronto from Nov 1 to 7, 2018.

Jainism's relevance in modernity and Jain representation on the Global Stage

The tenets of Jainism are more relevant today than ever; given the current global landscape. The Parliament of World Religions is the global platform to address the social issues that are currently most plaguing around the world. The Jain delegation participated in the conference by creating sacred spaces such as the Jain temple, educating religious leaders on the value of interfaith dialogue and empowering the next generation. The sessions included topics such as Climate Action, Women's Dignity, Countering War, Hate, and Violence, etc.

This year, there were over 8,300 attendees representing over 120 faiths from all around the world with multitude of programs. We featured 40+ session from 30+ Jain speakers that were a combination of spiritual leaders, subject matter experts within our community, and also included members under 40 years of age who shared their practice of Jainism with modernity. Speakers included a diversity of speakers and panelists from India, the United States, and Canada such as Acharya Lokesh Muniji, Sadhviji Shilapiji, Bhattarakji from Mulbidri, Samani Sanmitiji, Atmarpit Vidhiben from Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur, Kummar Chatterjee, Dr. S. L. Gandhi (represented by Naresh Jain), Rahul Jain, Dr. Panna Shah, Arvind Vora, Naresh Jain, Pravin K. Shah, Hema and Manda Pokharna, Manish Mehta, Kirit Daftary, along with Nikhil Bumb and Parth Savla.

This year, our community had strong representation on the topic of Women's Dignity with the following three sessions: "Women's Assembly: Women's Dignity Across the World's Wisdom, Traditions, & Society", "Women Ordained: The Life of Robed Female Religious Leaders in the Major Religious Traditions", and "Why Violence! For a Symbol of Beauty, Love and Creativity - A Woman." These sessions explored the leadership of women in religion and to discover workable solutions to counter violence against women and make the world more just and peaceful as it relates to gender equality.

Countering War, Hate & Violence is one of the most critical issues that plague our larger global society. Jainism, at its core, has always been a light bearer as the deeper practices of Ahimsa, Anekantvad, and Aparigraha extend beyond personal practice to explore the systemic aspects that perpetuate violence. Various sessions showed how to apply the "Jain Lens" to these issues; such as "Peace & Love, Not War, Hate & Violence", "Mahatma Gandhi and Non-Violence", "Understanding Privilege Dynamics Through the lens of Anekantvad" and "A Jain Approach to Inclusive and Sustainable Solutions to Inter-cultural and Inter-religious Conflicts". While maintaining individual practice is important, at the Parliament, we had a

unique opportunity to discuss these topics at more systemic levels. Given the #MeToo movement and the growing dialogue about "privilege" and how subversive it can be - for instance, where do you find the door handle on most doors, or when was the last time we assessed whether a building is handicap accessible? As Jains, we have an opportunity to lead the charge globally as it relates to this awareness.



"Sacred Spaces" such as temples of various sizes were showcased at the convention. One of the highlights of this year's Parliament was the mini Jain temple, which helped bring awareness about Jainism among the convention attendees. Jain Center of Toronto and their members gave us a great support in building the Jain Temple at the Parliament. It was a showcase and very spiritual place as all Jains got together to meet and discuss Jain Philosophy and answer questions to seekers about Jainism. Temple was built by architect Rahul Jobalia from Los Angeles and Ricardo Mora from Waco, TX. Jain Program leaflets and World Religion book were picked up by the attendees.

From the utilization of sacred geometry to the healing sounds of our Jain mantras and music, our Jain delegation organized music concerts which left participants dancing, singing, and moved by the musical serenades of Kummarji Chatterjee. When mantras are chanted piously in combination with various ragas of Indian Classical music its impact on the environment is magical, and has the ability to spread peace and harmony. Namokaar was presented in new form with different sutras. He explained how Namokaar Mantra can be helpful in bringing peace and harmony to this world. It brings positivity and helps you reduce the stress.

One of the unique presentations at this time was by the Toronto center of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur. They had a large booth displaying Ahimsa through several posters and publications. The booth also had information on how to teach children about Ahimsa through various games and storytelling. It was continuously manned by local Toronto Jain Sangh members.

For the first time, the Parliament had given an opportunity to showcase film related to Jainism - a dubbed video of the Best Drama of the year 2017, "Yugpurush". Yugpurush is about a great Indian saint, poet, philosopher and a spiritual luminary who was Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual mentor. It is a heart-touching and riveting portrayal of the profound relationship between Shrimadji and Gandhiji. It also shows how Shrimadji's guidance kept him from changing his beliefs from Hinduism to Islam or Christianity. The film was attended by Indians and non-Indians who knew about Gandhiji, but did not know how Jainism and Shrimad Rajchandraji had influenced his life style and his thinking.

In the area of Next Generation empowerment, we held sessions such as "Jainism and Next Generation" to explore the future of Jainism and how it can impact future generations. With our strong commitment to intergenerational dialogue and creating opportunities for our rising Jain professionals who share a passion to deepen their practice, we provided support for three community members under the age of 40 who led sessions and participated in panel discussions. We hope that many of our Jain youth will feel inspired to participate in future Parliament endeavors.



Lastly, we had a strong Jain presence on the main plenary stage of the Parliament (in front of 8,300+ attendees) at five plenaries – including Samanijis (reciting Navkar Mantra), Sadhviji Shilapiji Maharaj (10 min speech), Naresh Jain (panel), Kirit Daftary (presentation of the Ahimsa Award), and Nikhil Bumb (reading of the Parliament Global Ethic at the closing plenary).

2018 Ahimsa Award was presented on behalf of Jains to HH Swami Shri Chidanand Saraswatiji of Parmarth Niketan recognizing his exceptional contributions that enhances and strengthens the interfaith community through commitment to nonviolence. This award was first given at the 2015 Parliament in Salt Lake City, and has since been institutionalized with this second giving.

The Parliament arranged excursions to several places of worship in Toronto including Jain Temple. About 50 delegates attended the Jain puja ceremony & met with Jain representatives. Jain Center of Toronto served them with light Jain breakfast.

There were many sessions on Jainism. Some of them were as follows:

Interfaith Dialogue on the Symbol of Swastika: Naresh Jain and other faith leaders were moderated by Jewish Rabbi. Naresh described Jain perspective on the Swastika symbol, gave examples of its use in daily life, and discussed issues faced by the international students in American universities. He also suggested that spelling the religious svastika symbol with a 'v' would help to bring out the difference over a period, and that dialogue should continue in global forums.

The Justice Assembly, again a panel discussion led by Naresh Jain suggested based on teachings of Jain philosophy we should practice three 'R' s - Respect for all, Restrain from consumption, and Recycle. Our individual actions combined with others will make a difference as more resources will become available to those experiencing injustice.

"Moving Beyond Pious Thoughts, Prayers and Hug Fests: How Can Religions Really Contribute to World Peace?" was presented by Arvind Vaora. He suggested that Shanti fund and LIMFF (Long Island Multi Faith Forum) actions and activities - not simply prayers and pious thoughts - Shanti Fund and LIMFF have made lasting impacts on main stream though most of members were newly arrived immigrants.



Dr. Manish Mehta, Chair of JAINA Diaspora Committee organized and moderated two sessions on “Interfaith Collaborations for Sustainability” emphasizing ways to simultaneously “Reduce Our Carbon Footprint and Karmic Footprint”. The topics were:

- (A) Interfaith Collaboration for Sustainability, and
- (B) Small But Mighty: How Jains Leverage Vital Partnerships to Achieve Eco-Justice

The aim of these sessions was two-fold: (1) To illustrate how our Jain beliefs in Non-Violence and Jain Way of Life recognize the inter-dependence of life and balancing of consumption and economic activity with ecology and environment; and (2) To illustrate how Jains live and work, make positive career choices, and influence other faiths (in spite of our small population in the world) on the ecological front due to our ability to partner and leverage with interfaith groups and civic organizations, which allows Jains to promote our core values of compassion and care for humans and all life forms. In both sessions, invited speakers – representing the Christian, Hindu, Sikh and Jain faiths – shared multi-media presentations and case studies from their leadership in interfaith sustainability initiatives to achieve behavior change:

- “Eating with the Heart: Jainism, Vegetarianism, Non-Violence and Ecology.” How a vegan lifestyle significantly reduces our energy and environmental
- “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Inter-dependencies in the Climate-Water-Energy-Food-Health Nexus.” Assuring water quality for all through interfaith partnerships to solve complex infrastructure, waste-minimization and resilience
- “Religion in the New Machine Age.” Recognizing the pitfalls of automation and Artificial Intelligence, and how drastically the future of faith-based civilizations may be affected by AI and so-called smart technologies
- “Common Health Plus: A Genesis of Binary Human Care and Pop-Up Eye Care.” Uplifting the downtrodden and underserved populations of Jamaica with low-cost shipping container-based eyecare and dental clinics incorporating new health care and telemedicine initiatives
- “Project Dignity: Empowering the Rural Women and Girls in Sundarbans, India with In-home Toilets



The speakers of these sessions shown in the picture from L-R are Hardeep Anand, Rajesh Jain, Manish Mehta & Joseph Myers.

About JAINA's Interfaith Committee

Representing Jainism and the Jain community at the Parliament of World Religions Conference is just one way that we build bridges with other faiths and faith-based organizations to impact change from our shared values. On the global level, since its inception we have participated with Religions for Peace, Parliament of World Religions, World Jain Confederation, United Nations and the Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. On the national level we participate with RFP - USA, Intersection International, NCCI Calendar and others. Locally, our committee members reach out extensively with interfaith and multifaith organizations on a regular basis as well as during unique occasions.

To continue our work requires energy and resources!

To support our future efforts, donate by going to: <https://www.jaina.org/donations/donate.asp?id=17756>

Follow us for updates

To learn more about the JAINA Interfaith Committee and our future events as well as receive meaningful content, visit our website at <https://sites.google.com/view/jainsatpowr>

We are also active on social media! Follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/jainsatpowr2018), Instagram (www.instagram.com/jainsatpowr2018) and YouTube (<http://bit.ly/jainatpowrtyt>)

For all of the footage from this year's Jain Presence at the 2018 Parliament Convention: <http://bit.ly/jainsatpowr2018footage>

Final Note of Gratitude

We would like to thank all of the member of our hundred Jain delegates who invested their time, energy, and resources to learn more about other faiths, value the power of interfaith dialogue and chose to grow personally and make a larger difference for the community. Nikhil Bumb is the current trustee of the Parliament.



When Affinity Awakens For Self

By Himanshu Kishorchandra Gandhi

Himanshu is based in Boston, MA and avid follower of Jainism. He can be reached at h.gandhi@

When affinity awakens for Self/soul/Atam-Ram/Him-within

... Then reclusion from worldly pursuits arises

When one comes to know 'What am I'

... Then nothing remains of own.

When affinity awakens for Self..... (1)

When quiet introspection of Self comes about

... Then how can there remain glory for anything other than soul

Mystery of entire universe and every aspect of every matter, from times eternal to eternity, will unravel

... When one is able to discern between Self and everything else.

When affinity awakens for Self..... (2)

Why peck gravels, in pursuit of things

material that end in dust

... In the ocean of endless cycle of birth-misery-death

Nothing remains at hand, that which you believe is yours

... Transient are all worldly accomplishments

When affinity awakens for Self..... (3)

Awaken but now conscience

... Why bear sorrows

Why do you cry on your fate

... When boundless splendor remains within

When affinity awakens for Self..... (4)

Open up trove of ultimate treasure within

... Gain pure bliss of Self-realization/experience Him within

Make determination that I am ageless, eternal, without any fault/myth/deceit

... And nothing other than that

When affinity awakens for Self..... (5)

What fear, whose fear

... I remain indomitable brave fearless

What ego, whose insult

... I remain without any concern of any kind, accrescent to the ultimate state of eternal peace

When affinity awakens for Self..... (6)

Be the count of Karma

... Even if infinite

Nothing of mine is a result from them, nor am I due to them

.... Distinct from lifeless matter, I am only all-knowing pure consciousness

When affinity awakens for Self..... (7)

Importance of Satsang

By Reena Shah



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

"Satsang is the invitation to step into the fire of self-discovery. This fire will not burn you, it will burn only what you are not."
– Mooji

For most of people, the term satsang refers to some special event where devotees assemble to join together in worship that involves bhakti, mantra recitation or religious discourses. However, some of us already know that satsang is much more than this. The word Satsang itself, is often translated as "truthful association". Now, if we were to apply this literal translation as a definition, then, one may say that every single individual would have participated in satsang at some point in time in his life. But, what is the role of satsang in our own spiritual growth? Is it merely a medium for stimulating our spiritual receptivity for a fleeting moment of time, or can it be used as a powerful tool for spiritual development? Satsang is the foundation of everyone's happiness. The benefits of an hour of satsang outweigh the false benefits of the years of bad company (ku sang) one keeps. Just as a person's sickness could grow in the absence of fresh air to breathe, the sickness of a soul could grow.

Since satsang is basically a combination of Sat + Sang meaning Truth + Association, it refers to a gathering with a group of people or one person with the motive of getting closer to truth or soul. This normally happens in the company of a Supreme Master (Sadguru). Satsang, therefore, means to be with or remain associated with the inner quality of sat or purity or soul (atma). The qualities of soul (sat) manifests in human beings as knowledge, peacefulness, contemplativeness and thoughtfulness. People in whom this quality is predominant possess superior wisdom and knowledge and are usually drawn into devotional and spiritual way of living. Their thoughts revolve around the true nature of soul and they seek to liberate themselves

from the bonds of ignorance and the cycle of births and deaths by surrendering themselves to a sadguru and leading divine centered lives. A person in search of sat therefore is a natural satsangi. Whether he is in the company of others or alone, he is always in satsang or in association with the ultimate truth seekers of soul and purity. The purpose of a satsang is to develop the quality of sat through spiritual friendship or association with people in quest of sat or soul.

In order to realize the importance of satsang it is also important to first understand the different kinds of satsangs explained by my spiritual master Param Pujya Pappaji:

1) The first and foremost supreme kind of satsang is the one when one stays within the soul and experiences its true nature of seeing and knowing. The truest gift of this ability to stay within is when it shows you who you really are. It is not just an experience that comes and goes or that depends on a great spiritual teacher or a special group of people. It is the essence or core of you.

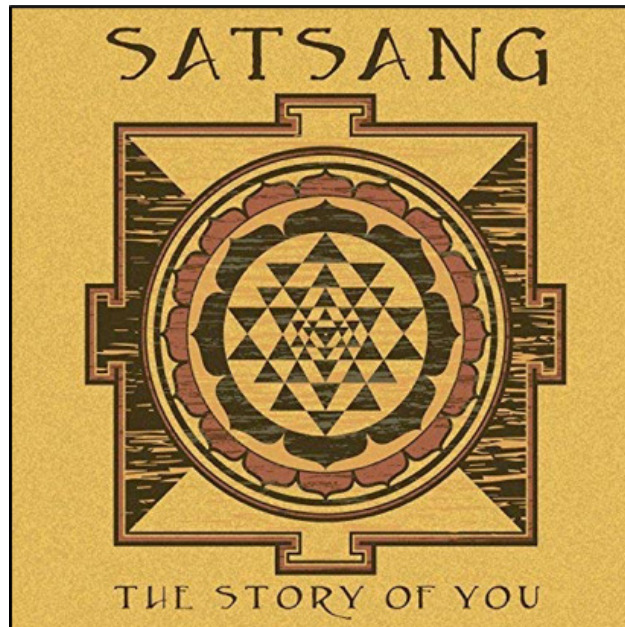
2) The second kind of satsang is when two enlightened souls (atmagyani) meet and discuss spirituality (parmaarth).

3) The third kind of satsang is the one where the disciple (shishya) meets the Supreme Master (Guru) with the desire to attain knowledge from him.

4) The fourth kind is the one where disciples of a guru meet and discuss spirituality

5) The fifth kind is when likeminded people discuss how to make the most out of this human life with the desire to attain enlightenment (gyaan) , is also called satsang.

Satsangs provide people with an opportunity to keep themselves engaged in divine centered





thoughts and actions to remain focused on their respective paths. Satsangs can generate powerful, cleansing, inspiring and purifying thought vibrations which can uplift the people who participate in them and also sanctify the place in which they are organized.

One understands the importance of sadguru through satsang. It is the first and most important means to discover oneself. Through satsang one attains the ability to discern right from wrong (vivek). It is because of satsang that the thirst to find the ultimate truth of the substance that we cannot see increases.

At a deeper level satsang also means to shift (sarakvu). In other words, because of satsang, my current state in my practice of spirituality (sadhana) should improve or shift in order for me to be able to absorb every word or silence that my sadguru utters or does not utter. Sadguru's silence is also meaningful. When a person visits a tavern (madhushala), they forget the world and their worries and get consumed by alcohol. Therefore, when they come out of this place, they look lost in their own happiness away from this world. Such should be the wild joy and pleasure when a person would come out of satsang. And such should be the commitment to satsang that when one goes in they leave their worldly stress outside and get immersed in the experience. Immersion is the key and until one does that, satsang won't give the desired fruits. In the state of immersion, it is important to distinguish 2 things: that we have cultivated one state that is permanent and the other one is temporary. The permanent state touches and stimulates a kind of happiness, a kind of peace and tranquility that won't go away. Such is the impact of satsang in a human being's life if we realize its importance. We need not worry or pay attention to the temporary external happiness that will vanish with time.

It is important to note however why the importance of satsang has not sunk in human mind. A lot of times we lack the eligibility (paatrata) to make good use of satsang even when we have the good fortune of being part of one. What I mean by eligibility is we do not have the ability to grasp what is being discussed or told there. To explain this with an example: when we see a beautiful lake, some of us might want to go and look and admire its beauty, some might want to dip their feet in the lake, while some might want to jump in to immerse themselves in the experience.



Similarly, in satsang three types of people come; one who might like satsang but might not commit to it, some might commit to it partially and some who surrender and immerse themselves in what is told to them in quest of that "sat" (truth). Most of the time we go to satsangs with our own beliefs, and when a sadguru showers his words of wisdom on us, we sit with an umbrella of resistance (swachhand). This stops us from immersing ourselves cent percent in the satsang. Most of us face this challenge due to lack of understanding of significance (mahatmya) of satsang. Satsang is a place where we let the soul regain its original color by shedding our beliefs with proper understanding. So, the first thing to correct is to accept and believe in a sadguru by developing our receptivity. Once we activate the attribute of receptivity, satsang will result in purity, permanent happiness, and enlightenment.

I would like to end with Vedanti Maanekdaasji's su vachan where he considers satsang with a sadguru to be more meaningful than moksha:

nij chandan se naa mile, he ro vaikunth dhaam;
santkrupa se paaiye, so hari subse thaam.

One does not get to go to Vaikunth (Lord Vishnu's abode) with one's own desire and belief system;
But under the guidance of a sadguru, one gets to go to Prabhu's abode.



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