

JainDigest

February 2020
Volume 13



A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America

COMPASSION

“Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and it's beauty.”

- Albert Einstein

Shri Satish Shah -
a VoSAP Beneficiary



Everyone Needs a Friend



VoSAP founder Pranav Desai with
Honorable PM Narendra Modi



VoSAP Booth at JAINA
Convention 2019



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.

JAINA Headquarters email: jainahq@gmail.com, Website: www.jaina.org

JAINA Executive Committee

President Mahesh Wadher
mahesh.wadher@gmail.com

First VP: Haresh Shah
harryshah2000@hotmail.com

Secretary: Hemant Shah
hemantil@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Ashok Savla
ashoksavla630@yahoo.com

VP Northeast: Sagar Khona
sagar.k.khona@gmail.com

VP Mideast: Paurav Vora
HelloVora@yahoo.com

VP Southeast: Bindesh Shah
shah.bindesh@gmail.com

VP Midwest: Rahul Dedhia
rahul.dedhia@gmail.com

VP Southwest: Ketan Sheth
ketanksheth@gmail.com

VP West: Dr. Jasvant Modi
jnmodi@hotmail.com

VP Canada Dr. Mahendra Jain
drjainkmc@gmail.com

Past President: Gunvant Shah
gunvant.shah@jaina.org

YJA Chair: Charmi Vakharia
charmi.vakharia@yja.org

YJA Chair: Monika Jain
monika.jain@yja.org

YJP Co-Chair: Sunny Shah
sunny.shah@yjp.jaina.org

YJP Co-Chair: Sagar Khona
komal.shah@yjp.jaina.org

JAIN DIGEST Editorial Team

310-721-5947

email: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

Jain Digest Committee Chairman and Editor-in-Chief

Dilip Parekh

Section Editors

Compassion: Jayana Shah
Devotion: Dr. Pravin L. Shah
Education: Raj Kumar Jain
Information: Giriraj Jain
Inspiration: Reena Shah
Transformation: Ramesh Khandhar
Young Generation: Sanjay Bhandari
Conversations: Dilip Parekh

Art and Design

Jayana Shah

Advisors

Dilip V Shah
Anop Vora
Ramesh Khandhar
Dr. Hema Pokharna

On the Cover:

Pictures related to the articles in the Compassion Section.
(The picture of the dog with a little girl is by Александр Мартинкевич from Pixabay)

Disclosure

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

CONTENTS

Jain Digest Editor's Note.....	4
Jaina President's Message	5
Section: Compassion (Jayana Shah)	
VoSAP – Making the World Accessible for Specially Abled People.....	8
Helping to Fulfil a Common Need of People & Animals - Companionship.....	10
by Shohil Kothari	
Section: Devotion (Dr. Pravin L. Shah)	
Shri Anandghanji Maharaj – A Master of Devotional Spirituality.....	12
By Dr. Pravin L Shah	
Gurudev Shri Kanjishwami – A Revered Saint of Modern Times.....	14
By Kirit Gosalia	
Section: Education (Rajkumar Jain)	
Jainism: Know It, Understand It & Internalize It.....	16
By Pratiksha Shah	
Mai Svayam Bhagwan Hun	17
By Dr. Hukam Chand Bharill	
Section: Information (Giriraj Jain)	
JAINA Committee Update.....	19
Switzerland Law Prohibiting Inhumane Practice of Boiling Lobsters Alive..	21
Harmony Between Jains and Sikhs.....	22
By Dr. H. Sahota and Dr. Sulekh Jain	
Section: Inspiration (Reena Shah)	
The Radical Power of Humility (part .2).....	24
By Nipun Mehta,	
My Inspiration - Param Pujya Pappaji (Prem Acharyaji).....	28
By Reena Shah	
Section: Transformation (Ramesh Khandhar)	
Reaching the Fountain of Joy within You.....	31
By Dr Dilip Parekh	
Transformational Maun Sadhana Shibir.....	33
By Ramesh Khandhar	
Section: Young Generation (Sanjay Bhandari)	
The Elephant in the Room: Debunking Youth Involvement in the	
Western Jain Community.....	35
By Arpit Mehta	
Activities of JOY by the Youth at Jain Society of Greater Detroit.....	37
By Bhaani Jain	
Section: Conversations	
Conversation with Ajaita Shah – a social entrepreneur:.....	39
By Priyanka Shah	
Conversation with Tapasvi Meenaxi Shah.....	42
By Raj Kumar Jain	



Editor's Note

Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

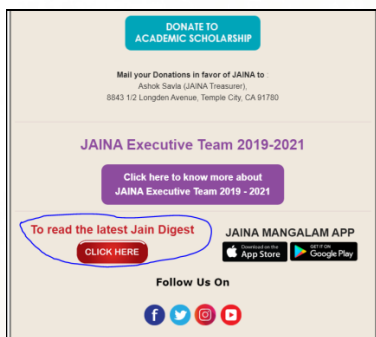
On behalf of Jain Digest Editorial Staff, I wish you a very Happy New Year! May the year 2020 bring you good health, peace and prosperity. We are pleased to bring you the February issue of the Jain Digest with articles on varied topics in 8 sections: Compassion, Devotion, Education, Information, Inspiration, Transformation, Young Generation and Conversations. The format is the same as the October issue; with embedded videos to enrich your reading and viewing experience.

We thank all those that have provided us wonderful feedback on the October 2019 issue. Beginning with that issue, our editors now have taken up new responsibilities as a "Section Editor". You can see their names at the beginning of each section. With their help we are able to bring you more variety in the type of articles we publish. Beginning with this issue, Raj Kumar Jain from Piscataway, New Jersey has joined us as a Section Editor for the Education section.

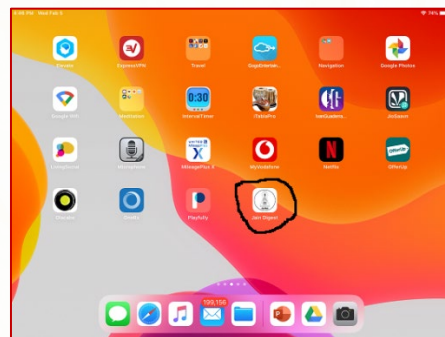
In addition to Dilip V Shah from Philadelphia and Ramesh Khandhar from Los Angeles, we now have two new advisors to help us to steer us in the right direction and advise us on the topics and content we cover in the magazine. They are Anop Vora from Rochester, NY and Dr. Hema Pokharna from Chicago.

Another change some of you may have noticed is our new collaboration with Young Jain Professionals (YJP). Our 'Young Generation' section editor Sanjay Bhandari, has received wonderful cooperation from YJP's Communications Director, Priyanka Shah. We thank her and appreciate her efforts in providing us with the content from *YJPerspective* and allowing us to republish it in Jain Digest.

Please join me in congratulating and thanking the Section Editors, Advisors and YJP staff and all the talented writers for their selfless service to the Jain community – not just in North America, but all over the World since the online version of the magazine is accessible from anywhere, anytime; from any device – smart phones, tablets, laptops, desktops, etc.



However, we have learned that many people have not heard about the online Jain Digest. Although the announcement of the new issue is sent out via Newsletter and email, we realize that it is easy for it to get lost in hundreds of emails you receive. Hence, now in each JAINA Newsletter we provide you the link to the Jain Digest page on the JAINA.org website and you can access the latest as well as past issue of the magazine.



Another way to have the Jain Digest always easily accessible on your phone or tablet is to add the Jain Digest link to the screen of your device – just like an App - See the circled JAINA logo in the picture on the right above. This can be done by using the feature "Add to Home Page" available on smart phones and tablets. Detailed information about how to do this will be provided in the JAINA Newsletter and via email.

Often we get general compliments from our readers about how much they enjoy reading the articles. To make it easy for you to provide us feedback on the articles you like, at the end of each article we have provided you a link. The link looks like this: **To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>** We noticed that only a few people used the link in the October issue. We would like to hear from more readers so that we can make any improvements needed to the content. We request you to please use the link and provide us with your valuable feedback. We look forward to hearing from you.

Hope you enjoy reading the varied, enriching articles we have for you in the February 2020 issue.

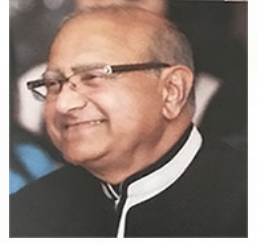
In Seva,

Dilip Parekh

JAINA President's Message

Jai Jinendra!

On behalf of the JAINA Executive Committee and JAINA Board of Directors, I wish a very Happy, Healthy and Spiritually rewarding 2020 to you and to your loved ones. With your support, JAINA continues to spread our shared vision to evolve, promote Jain practices and educate 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.



I am honored to walk you through a number of accomplishments JAINA has achieved as well as the projects JAINA has been working on over the last 7 months. Here are the highlights from some of the events:

JAINA Delegation Visits India in 2020:

In January 2020, JAINA Delegation led by myself, First V.P. Haresh Shah and Past President Dilip Shah visited India for the events below.



1) On January 11th, JAINA in association with Jain Academy Education Research (Mumbai) held the first Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) competition in India at Mumbai University. Five teams of Jain students from Mumbai University competed vigorously in a standing room only auditorium for two hours. The event was also attended by two JAB coordinators Sunil Vakharia and Raj Sancheti from the US. JAINA has invited a team from Mumbai University to come and participate in the JAB competition at the next JAINA Convention in 2021.

2) On January 14, 2020, JAINA Delegation attended the opening of the 46th Medical camp of Shree Bidada Sarvodaya Trust, Kutch. JAINA donated \$2,000 to Shree Bidada Sarvodaya Trust.



3) On January 18-19, 2020, JAINA co-sponsored the first **International Jain Conference** in Ahmedabad in collaboration with JITO's Ahmedabad Chapter, World Jain Confederation and Shrutratnakar Trust. The conference was attended by about 400 people from all over India UK, Dubai and the US. The conference was well received by the participants.



Diwali 2019 Celebration at Capitol Hill

On November 14, 2019, JAINA co-sponsored the Diwali celebration event on Capitol Hill, Washington DC. Over 50 people from JAINA represented the Jain community in USA, while over 400 members of the Indian American community from all over the United States attended the event.

JAINA EC & BOD Meeting at Siddhachalam

From November 8 to 10, 2019, JAINA had a successful EC and BOD meeting at Siddhachalam in New Jersey.



Establishment of Shrimad Rajchandra Chair

On October 23, 2019, the University of California celebrated the inauguration of *Shrimad Rajchandra Endowed Chair in Jain Studies*.



Paryushan/Das Lakshana Newsletter

JAINA published 18 special Newsletters during the biggest Parva of Jainism, Paryushan and Das Lakshana.

New JAINA Committees

JAINA has amalgamated its two committees Jain Networking Forum (JNF) and Jain Milan into a new committee named Jain Connect. The next Jain Connect event will be in May 2020.

Formed new committees *Population Survey Committee* to survey the number of Jain families and *JAINA Archives Committee* to collect and preserve all the past records of JAINA.

Jain Digest

This is the third online issue of Jain Digest and we are glad to explore the possibility of going Green gradually by publishing an electronic version of Jain Digest. The committee is constantly working on giving our readers a better experience. The “Bhavanas” book published during Paryushan 2019, has been well received by the Jain community. We thank Jain Society of Rochester, New York and Jain Center of Southern California for their support by purchasing the book in bulk quantities for their members and pathshala students.

JAINA Calendar 2020



Hope you received and loved the JAINA Calendar 2020 with the beautiful theme of *Jain Temples in India*.

Upcoming Events:

JAINA and Jain Center of Greater Boston are bringing you an International Symposium, “Ancient Wisdom Meets the Modern Age”, on June 20-21, 2020 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston.

JAINA 99 Yatra Committee is planning 99 Yatra at Shree Shatrunjay Mahatirth, 12 Gau Chhari Palit Yatra, Shree Sammet Shrikarji Tirth. The yatra will take place from November 2020 through January 2021.

JAINA Convention Committee 2021 is already on the move with the preparations of Convention theme, the Host city, programs and more.

JAINA Digital Presence

The Technology Committee is revamping and building a user-friendly JAINA website.

JAINA publishes a weekly newsletter where you will find the news on Jainism, JAINA initiatives, events/activities of Jain Center, Jain Stories and Articles and more.

Connect with JAINA on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Young Jains of America

YJA is working hard on YJA Convention 2020 preparations. They recently had their Board meeting in Dallas, TX.

Young Jain Professionals

On October 18-20, 2019, YJP had its 3rd Annual Conference in Chicago.

Looking ahead, 2020 promises to bring Jains together globally and spread the message of Ahimsa, tolerance, compassion, and charity.

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

Peace, Love & Happiness,

Mahesh Wadher

Section: Compassion

Section Editor: Jayana Shah

VoSAP – Making the World Accessible for Specially Abled People

According to United Nations, there are more than 1 billion people in the world with disability. Currently there are 70 million physically or mentally disabled people in India. People with disabilities battle multiple challenges, such as societal attitudes, religious beliefs, acceptance & inclusion. The lack of access to good quality education and employment keep many from being financially independent.

Pranav Desai, born in Ahmedabad, had experienced these problems as a child since he was affected by polio at age 4. He had trouble getting into school because the school authorities were resistant to attend to his physical needs. Fortunately, he got admission on trial basis. He took the challenge, topped the class and began enjoying the benefits of inclusive education. Pranav overcame day-to-day hardships and consistently performed well throughout schooling. He went on to complete his engineering in electronics and communication, followed by an MBA in sales and marketing from Gujarat University.



In 2015, Pranav founded the Voice of Specially Abled People (VoSAP). Voice of SAP is a Global Advocacy Organization with a mission to redefine the idea of a disabled person. They're not disabled, but rather Specially Abled People, capable of leading an empowered and independent lifestyle.

In a "Special Consultative Status" with UN ECOSOC and accreditation with UN COSP, Voice of SAP is working to create an Inclusive and Accessible world by accelerating implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN and goals of UN CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) treaty.

VoSAP promotes empowerment of specially abled people through accessibility, education, and employment. Their Vision statement is "To operate as the "Transformation Catalyst" for the world to become ACCESSIBLE and INCLUSIVE place where Specially Abled People enjoy equality as human beings, opportunity to excel and contribute based on their abilities and live with dignity and independence." The organization currently has over 8300 volunteers that help in various areas such as growing awareness, fundraising, technology, creating content, research, etc.

The VoSAP website, voiceofsap.org, contains a lot of information about the organization. There are many photos, videos and inspirational stories about the people who have benefited from solutions provided by VoSAP. Here are links to a few videos that you will find informational and inspiring.

A Simple, Creative, short animated message: <https://youtu.be/Bix3jWOUjeQ>

VoSAP Corporate Message: https://www.youtube.com/embed/Hnlh_c5Vpl0?autoplay=1

Enablement Program and Interaction with Beneficiaries: <https://youtu.be/QxfqtlFIkN0>

Sparsh Shah, Youth Leader of VoSAP: <https://youtu.be/JKwQHuMFTCQ>

Stories of Beneficiaries

The success of any organization such as VoSAP is measured by its impact on the society; the beneficiaries of the activities of the organization. VoSAP website contains a few such stories at <https://www.voiceofsap.org/inspirational-stories/>

Here is one such story about a victim of prosthetic challenges whose life has changed by the tricycle he received from VoSAP.

VoSAP beneficiary Shri Satish Shah is Winning hearts and helping the family

(By Lalithkumar Gujarati on January 05, 2020)

दग्धं दग्धं त्यजति न पुनः काञ्चनं कान्तिवर्णम्। छिन्नं छिन्नं त्यजति न पुनः स्वादुतामिक्षुदण्डम्। धृष्टं धृष्टं त्यजति न पुनश्चन्दनं चारुगन्धम्। प्राणान्तेऽपि प्रकृतिः विकृतिर्नायते नोत्तमानाम्॥

Despite being repeatedly burnt the gold does not lose its luster, despite being crushed and broken sugarcane doesn't lose its sweetness, despite being rubbed repeatedly the sandalwood doesn't lose its fragrance! Similarly, the noble nature of great men doesn't change until their last breath!!



Shri Satish Shah a victim of prosthetic challenges since his birth in this mortal world, is having the same kind of spirit. Not being able to walk, getting attacks of fit, not having clear vocal speech. Thus, having multiple physical challenges, but having a clearly noble thought process of being helpful to the family and even to society. Satishbhai is now around 35 years old. His thought process of being self-dependent got a big boost. During one of the camps of Voice of SAP, he received a tricycle. The tricycle is now an integral part of his daily life. Satishbhai is selling Agarbattis using the tricycle. He sits at the center of the tricycle and keeps bundles of Agarbattis to his left and right-hand sides. Spacious tricycle is making his activity of selling Agarbattis easier. When I asked him, how much do you earn from each packet's sell? He replied, "I keep only 10 rupees for me. I don't make huge profits. Daily around 10-15 packets get sold and that gives me around 100-150 rupees a day". Thus, he earns around Rs 3,000 – Rs 4,000 a month.

True Hero

Satishji's mother, Mrs. Padmavati told me, "Satish is a true hero. Today, whatever little furniture we have in our house, is bought by him. He gets happy if we keep lunch or dinner celebrations for our relatives. Often, he brings a saree for me." Satishji's sister, Ms. Bhumii told me, "he cares for me a lot. He often brings some snacks for me, he always tries to bring a smile on my face".

Big Man

Now, this young and mentally energetic man is aspiring to be a "Big Man". He wants to earn lots of money and he knows that his education up to only 4 standards cannot help him in achieving his dream. So, he wants to get educated and expand his boundaries because now, using his tricycle he can go easily, wherever he wants! Thus, a **fantastic initiative of VoSAP** to distribute Assistive Devices has bought happiness, self-reliance, smiles, aspirations and a big hope to achieve more. Voice of SAP Beneficiary Shri Satish Shah is Winning hearts and helping the family.

उद्योगिनं पुरुषसिंहमुपैति लक्ष्मीः। दैवेन देयमिति का पुरुषा वदन्ति दैवं विहत्य कुरु पौरुषमात्मशक्त्या। यत्ने कृते यदि न सिध्यति कोत्र दोषः ॥

Goddess of wealth reaches out to those who work hard. Only lazy unworthy people wait for god or luck to fulfill their wishes. Don't depend on luck, and surge ahead with your own capabilities! Even after putting in all your efforts if you don't reach your goal, so what!?! (No harm).



To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

Helping to Fulfil a Common Need of People and Animals - Companionship

By Shohil Kothari

Volunteer work often teaches us as much about ourselves as it does to those we are trying to assist. My first extensive volunteer experience took place as a teenager fulfilling my high school graduation requirement. I volunteered over 200 hours at the Discovery Science Center - a children's museum and interactive science attraction. This work quickly taught me the immense patience necessary to work with and teach small children. It was also my first time dealing with customers and understanding what it means to represent an organization. The job entailed answering questions on the exhibit floor, teaching children science principles, cold calling a database to raise money (particularly difficult for a shy kid like myself), and helping construct new attractions. This first volunteering experience gave me so many transferable skills that I would never have developed otherwise - an often overlooked advantage of volunteer work.

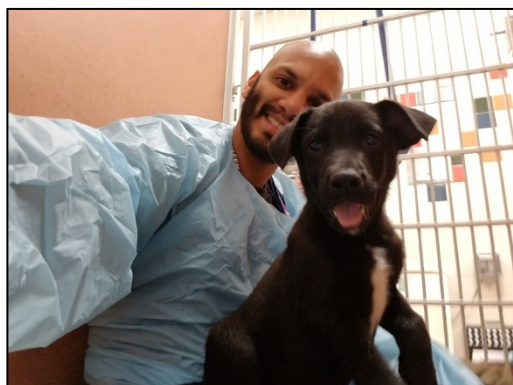
My next experience volunteering occurred in college, where I completed a certificate program in community service and leadership. The program taught us what it means to be compassionate at a societal level. There are so many in our communities who are disadvantaged, recovering, and seeking some form of help. Through this program, we explored the institutions necessary to serve the community, how social entrepreneurship is filling a gap that is being left unserved by the public sector, and how to effect wider change. It was a completely different perspective on compassion and volunteerism than I had experienced prior, and left me feeling inspired and intimidated by the scale of our social issues.

As I entered the working world and started my own career, I knew there was something missing in my life. Though I felt challenged at work, I rarely felt fulfilled. Knowing there is so much good to be done, I had to get myself involved somehow. During this time, I had become a member of an organization that offers lectures on various geo-political and societal topics. One day I had the fortune of attending a presentation by the founder of The Forgotten International - a non-profit organization dedicated to helping those living on less than a dollar a day through grassroots projects in tandem with the local community, such as building schools, hospitals, and orphanages. I was so inspired by their work and approach that I knew I had to help somehow. They were in dire need of my marketing skills to help launch their website (<https://www.theforgottenintl.org>), run online fundraising campaigns, and setup backend systems to streamline their work processes. I loved that I was making an impact for the organization, and that they really appreciated my help, but became drained by having to do the same type of work that I do at my day job. This experience taught me that compassion requires constant renewal, as it is so easy to become numb and desensitized, and that we can often help in more ways than we realize... which leads me to my current volunteer work.

Affection, companionship, belonging, family - while we view these needs as core to being human, they are not reserved for humans alone. A deep longing to bond crosses species, and is readily present in the eyes of many animals we share our lives with. Compassion is often felt as empathy expressed between people, but are we alone deserving of compassion?

I frequently find myself feeling cynical about the world and helpless to affect any real change. After working with organizations to reduce destitution and abject poverty, improving the lives of the poorest in the world, I wondered if all of our work was really making a lasting difference. When the pen stroke of a government official is all it takes to bulldoze an entire community, wiping away years of development and progress, it is hard to maintain optimism and conviction. It demands superhuman dedication to push on against all the odds.

In the midst of this soul-searching, I walked by a stray dog undergoing its own struggle. It was fearful of humans - no doubt learned from painful past experiences - yet also craving connection, to be noticed and cared for. It wanted my attention, but knew it was dangerous to get close. Was this dog any less deserving of compassion?



being alone again. I decided this is somewhere I can make a lasting difference in a life, whether a dog or a person.

My local animal shelter takes in dogs from the surrounding area as well as from cities further away. Hundreds pass through the halls on a monthly basis, trying to find their new forever home. While these animals often have different needs, temperaments, backgrounds, and behavioral issues, they all have one thing in common: a deep longing for connection. As a volunteer, I'm able to spend time socializing the dogs, training them on basic obedience and etiquette, understanding what motivates them to follow commands, and what it takes to turn them into a grinning puddle of joy. All of this time and energy is spent for a single outcome - to transform these stray dogs into pets ready to be adopted by humans who love them more than they ever imagined; resulting in a dog happier than they ever were.

Imagine if I asked you to step into a room with a pitbull bigger than some adults. Would you feel intimidated? Scared? Would you expect this to be a violent animal? Well, the most gentle dog I have ever had the pleasure of working with was a 120 pound, deaf pitbull. Looking at him, before entering his kennel, I had the same doubts and fears. But he quickly taught me that the stereotypes are often wrong, and life is full of surprises. This dog simply craved pets and physical affection. He never barked, never growled, never reacted to other dogs or people. He was the very definition of a gentle giant. The compassion I showed towards the dog was given back to me many times over through its affection, love and admiration. And I learned a valuable lesson in judging based on appearance.

Does any of this make a lasting impact or a real difference? While this work at the animal shelter may not alleviate global poverty or turn someone's life around, for the people who just found their best friend, it brightens their lives in a way they never expected; and for the furry friends which now have a home, their lives are truly changed forever. That fleeting moment of compassion - whether for an animal or a person - can truly transform all it touches.

About the Author:

Driven by the love of nature, Shohil calls the Bay Area his home. Though he works in technology, he often finds time to volunteer at the local animal shelter to find a bit of humanity. He can be reached at: shohilk@gmail.com

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

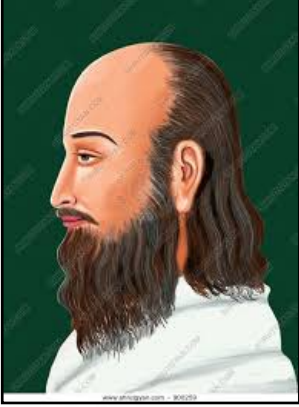


Shri Anandghanji Maharaj – A Master of Devotional Spirituality

Dr. Pravin L. Shah, Reading, PA

YOGIRAJ ANANDGHANJI (1600-1682 A.D.)

During the last two thousand years, we have been blessed with significant contributions to Jain philosophy and culture by many eminent Acharyas including Acharya Umaswati, Kundkund, Pujayapad, Samant Bhadra, Siddhasen, Haribhadra, Amrutchandra, Hemchnadra, Yashovijayji Upadhayay, Yogiraj Anandghanji and Shrimad Rajchandra.

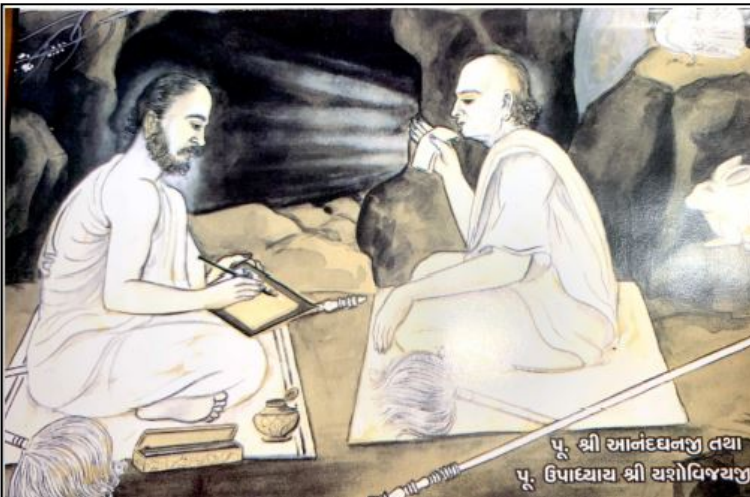


While Jain literature has been highly enriched by the epic writings of each of the above Jain Masters, it is accurate to state that the major credit for introducing Jain Bhakti-yoga or spiritual devotional path in Jain religion goes to Anandghanji who lived the life of a great yogi some three hundred and fifty years ago. It is believed that Anandghanji lived approximately 125 years after Mira Bai and they both were born in small village, Medta, in Rajasthan, during the time of Mogul emperor Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. As we know, while Anandghanji was a great Adhyatma-Yogi, his contemporary Yashovijayji was equally eminent Gnan-Yogi who composed more than 108 scriptures and Yashovijayji considered Anandghanji as his spiritual teacher after they both met in person.

Two examples of his life among many, illustrate his character and talent. Once he stayed in an upashray near the house of a well off shravak (nagarsheth) in a small village in Rajasthan. It was a common practice that any monk visiting and staying in this upashray was to follow the rules made by this nagarsheth and any lectures given by a monk could only start after the nagarsheth had arrived. One day Anandghanji started his lecture before the nagarsheth arrived. After the lecture, Nagarsheth reminded Anandghanji "I provide you with residence, food and clothes, and you should have waited for me to start the lecture". Without getting upset Anandghanji took off the clothes and said "I have already consumed the food you gave me; but here are your clothes." He then went into forest and composed a poem based on this experience that teaches us about detachment; "Asha Auran Ki Kya Keeje" (*One should not have any expectations from others*).

The second example is very important in Jain history. Once when Upadhayay Yashovijayji was giving a lecture in a town in Gujarat many people came to attend the talk. At the far end of the hall, an old person was sitting with a blanket and looking constantly at Yashovijayji. A miracle happened at that time when Yashovijayji somehow figured out that the old man with the blanket must be Anandghanji. He had heard a lot of praise about him. So he wanted to meet him personally after his talk was over. However, Anandghanji left Yashovijayji before he could meet him. Yashovijayji went out to search for him and, after many hours of search, found Anandghanji meditating in a forest under a tree. Yashovijayji was overjoyed to meet this great Master. Anandghanji knew that Yashovijayji had gone to Kashi to study philosophy for 10 years. So he asked Yashovijayji if could recite the first verse of Das-Vaikalik sutra. Yashovijayji recited this famous first verse promptly:

***Dhammo Mangal Utkrustam, Ahinsa Sayamo Tavo;
Deva vi tum namasante, Jas Dhame saya mano.***



Then Anandghanji asked Yashovijayji to explain the meaning of this verse and he explained that ahimsa, sanyam and tap were three pillars of Vitrag religion and one who practiced these three attributes whole heartedly was worshiped by angels and devas. Anandghanji told him to provide more in-depth meaning of the verse but Yashovijayji could not elaborate any more after half an hour. Thereafter Anandghanji explained the meaning of the verse for next 72 hours and during his narration Yashovijayji's ego of his scholarship melted away completely, and he cried in reverence to him. He bowed down to Anandghanji and accepted him as his master (Sadguru).

Anandghanji took Jain diksha at a very young age and attained self-realization based on the spiritual practice in his spiritual practice. He saw Jain community divided in sects and dogmas and found no one being open minded and keenly interested in understanding the Adhyatma-yog or genuine spiritual path as prescribed by Lord Mahavir. At a very young age he decided to live alone in solitude in Mount Abu and composed the epic stavans popularly known as Tirthankar Chovisi and his popular Hindi Padavali consisting of 108 Bhajans narrated beautifully by Pujya Mukti-Darshan M.S.

TIRTHANKAR CHOVISI – A DIVINE RIVER OF SPIRITUAL FLOW

A self-realized Jain master like Anandghanji has expressed his sadhana beautifully into each of the Stavans of the Tirthankar-Chovisi, that has been narrated and explained in detail by scholars like, Motilal Kapadia, Maneklal G. Javeri, Rev. Buddhisagarji Maharaj, Dr. Kumarpal Desai, and Parasbhai Jain of Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram Agas near Baroda. Anandghanji's Chovisi combines and integrates the three great spiritual pillars of self-realization: Gyan-yog, Bhakti-yog, and Adhyatma-yog which ignites our spirit with genuine detachment, equanimity, and burning desire for liberation, the three most important attributes of Samyak-Darshan. Let us review three compositions of Anandghanji Chovisi to experience the divine nectar:

In his first stavan, Yogiraj addresses Lord Aadinath as "Pritam" or "beloved master" and confesses to him that he has suffered infinite cycles of birth and death due to the ignorance of self but now he knows that he will be united with Lord Adinath until eternity after pleasing him with his devotion. This sentiment is expressed in the first verse of the stavan.

*Rushabha Jineshvar Pritam Mahro re,
Or Na Chahu re Kanth:
Rijyo Sahib Sang Na Parihare re,
Bhange Saadi Ananat.*

In the above verse, one can see incredible loyalty and faith of a devotee. Anandghanji states his devotion to Lord Arihanta and affirms his full conviction, that he will attain the same Siddha state as Lord Aadinath, with total surrender.

In the second stavan, Anandghanji narrates the qualifications of a disciple to recognize an authentic Guru – a Sadguru. The most important attribute a disciple needs is the divine vision that can be attained through total commitment, devotion, and surrender to the teachings of great Masters and study of the scriptures. The disciple will be blessed with Sadguru's grace at the right moment. As the old adage says, "When a student is ready, the teacher will appear".

In the fifteenth stavan, Anandghanji explains what happens to a disciple when he receives the teachings of a Sadguru in this incredible verse:

*Pravachan anjan jo Sadguru kare, dekhe param nidhan Jineshvar;
Rhiday nayan nihade Jagguru, mahima Meru saman Jineshvar ...Dharma Jineshvar*

When a disciple receives the teachings of a Sadguru with total surrender, he transcends to divinity to experience the precious and priceless divine self. For the first time, the disciple experiences his own soul possessing the same potential and attributes of Lord Dharmanath as narrated in this composition. For example, Shri Gautam Swami experienced his own true Self when he was blessed by Lord Mahavir during his first meeting with total surrender to his Master!

In each of the Chovisi compositions, Anandghanji has presented unique and new perspective of devotion, and a condensed overview of the key doctrines of Jain agamas in poetic form. We can recite, memorize, and meditate daily these stavans to experience spiritual enlightenment. This is the real magic of total devotion!

About the Author



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, Anandghanji, and Shrimad Rajchandra in great depth over the last forty years. He is fluent in Sanskrit and Prakrit, and he has conducted Parushna programs and spiritual discourses for over three decades. He has published a groundbreaking book entitled, "Atmasadhana na Amrut Anusthan" which was released in July 2017 Jaina convention in N.J. He lives in Reading PA and his email

is: psahusa@yahoo.com

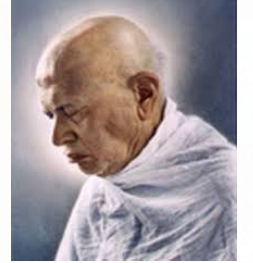
To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

Gurudev Shri Kanjishwami - A Revered Saint of Modern Times

By Dr. Kirit Gosalia

Since time immemorial, India has been a birthplace for countless Tirthankars, revered saints, enlightened personalities as well as philosophical thinkers. In the current time cycle, 24 Tirthankars from Bhagwan Rushabhdev to Mahavir Swami were born in India. Under the reign of Lord Mahavir, many great sages such as Dharsen Acharya, Kundkund Acharya, and Umaswati Acharya etc. continued to spread the Jain philosophy.

During the past 150 years or so, the great saints such as Shrimad Rajchandra and Gurudev Shri Kanjishwami (1889-1980) continued this tradition. When the spirituality was waning, and the blind rituals became predominant, they rekindled the Jain spiritual knowledge. Gurudev Shri Kanjishwami not only revitalized the metaphysical knowledge but also freed the congregation from blind ritualistic form of religion and thereby made us, the mundane souls, forget the absence of Tirthankar Bhagwan in the present miserable fifth Aara of the current time cycle.



Early Life

In the small town named Umralla, in Saurashtra region of the state of Gujarat in India, a great soul was born on 21st April 1890, Vikram Samvat 1946 in the month of Vaishakh. He was given the name "Kanji".

At the age of seven, he started school in vernacular medium. His sharp intellect, mild mannerism, quiet attitude and selfless nature, made Kanji the favorite with students and teachers. Even though he used to excel in studies, he was not satisfied, as there was inner quest for something different.

At age thirteen, he lost his mother and came to a town named Palej with his father. After 4 years, His father passed away and Kanji had to take over the family business. While working in the shop, he continued to read religious scriptures in his spare time.

Searching for the Truth:

At age 24, he became a successful monk in Sthanakvasi congregation having thousands of followers coming to listen to his discourses regularly in different towns and cities.



He was constantly in search of the truth. Eight years after becoming monk, he received the great scripture, *Samaysar*, written by Kundkund Acharya Dev. He immediately realized that this great scripture would show him the path to liberation. He intensely studied *Samaysar* and various other scriptures like *Pravachansar*, *Moksh marg Prakashak*, *Dravya Sangrah*, *Samyak Gyan Dipika* etc. He now realized that the search for truth was over. He realized that these scriptures were showing the real metaphysical aspects of the Jain philosophy. If one wants to liberate from the mundane life, then this was the path to follow. After 12 years of intense and close study of such scriptures, He realized that the real path to enlightenment

had opened up for him. He noticed changes occurring within himself and decided to get out of the congregation to follow his own path.

Life dedicated to showing the true path to others:

In 1935, he left the Sthanakvasi congregation and established himself in a small town called Songadh. In outskirts of the town there was an old house named "Star of India". He decided to stay there in seclusion and declared that he was no more a monk but a simple householder (shravak). He started discourses on *Samaysar* and the number of disciples started growing. Soon a bigger place was needed and a lecture hall was built.

He started giving discourses two times a day and also had informal discussions with followers. Later on, Simandhar Swami Jain temple and other buildings were built. During his lifetime, under his able guidance, a total of 66 Panch Kalyanak and Veda Pratishtha were conducted all over India as well as in Nairobi. He also travelled all over India for pilgrimage of holy places such as Samet Shikharji. He attained self-realization (Samyak Darshan) and preached the method of Self-Realization by "Bhed Gyan" using the existing scriptures to explain the logic and the process.



He studied 183 small and big scriptures and gave discourses on 38 of them. On Samaysar (written by Acharya Kund Kund Dev 2000 years ago), he gave discourses 19 times, each time lasting for more than 2 years. Besides Samaysar, he also gave discourses on Pravachasar, Niyamsar, Asthpahud, Parmatma Prakash, Samaysar Kalash Tika etc. scriptures. He gave spiritual discourses twice a day for 45 years. Because of his selfless directives, today scores of disciples have studied the scriptures and many spiritual experts are available to continue the flame of spirituality that he rekindled.

Over 9000 hours of audio recordings of his lectures are available online for inquisitive students. Many books in Gujarati and Hindi languages are available online for serious disciples. Since 1943, a monthly magazine

named "Atmadharma" is being published regularly quenching the thirst of spirituality for the worthy souls. All the literature is available on kanjismwami.org, vitragvani.com and atmadharma.com websites.

Several of his pravachans are available on YouTube. As an example, here is a link to one of his pravachans on "Yogsaar"; a scripture which guides us on how to focus all our attention on the soul. It is an audio recording of his pravachan on July 22nd 1966 in Gujarati with Hindi subtitles. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikL3hrcciDk>.

On 28th November 1980, on Kartik Krshna 7th day, Vikram samvat 2037, at the age of 91, he left the human body.

During his lifetime, he spread several fundamental principles of Jainism. Today, those principles are making our life much more meaningful. A few are listed here:

- 1) One substance cannot make any changes in the function of other substances. Every substance of the universe has its own independent existence (Samaysar stanza 3).
- 2) Every substance goes through various modes in a sequential order - Krambaddh Paryay (Samaysar stanza 308-311).
- 3) One can get enlightenment only by taking refuge in the eternal state of the soul (Samaysar stanza 11).
- 4) The essence of all the four aspects of Jain literature (Prathamanyog, Charananuyog, Karnanuyog and Dravyanuyog) is to obtain passionless state - Vitaragata (Panchastikay stanza 172).
- 5) Relative pluralism – Anekant - In a given substance, at the same time, there is presence of mutually contradictory powers. For example, the permanency and transiency of the soul (Appendix Samaysar).
- 6) A given soul, whether pure or impure, is unable to change the occurrence of a given mode at a given time. Every mode comes at its prescribed time (Kartikeya Anuprexa stanza 211).
- 7) No substance of the universe was ever created or will be destroyed in future. They have their own independent timeless existence (Atmasiddhi Pravachans and Samaysar stanza 2).
- 8) Self-realization does not come through the auspicious inclinations as they are the reason for bondage. It can only be achieved by going beyond the bondage of auspicious and inauspicious inclinations (Samaysar stanza 145, 146, and 273).

About the Author



Dr. Kirit Gosalia from Phoenix, Arizona, is a retired cardiologist. He is an ardent student of Jain Philosophy as propagated by Acharya Shri Kundkund Swami, Gurudev Shri Kanjismwami and Shrimad Rajchandraji for the past 30 years. He conducts religion classes at the Jain Center of Greater Phoenix. He has given spiritual discourses in USA, Canada, India, Europe, Middle East and Africa. Currently he conducts Jainism classes four times a week in English via video conference in North America for young professionals and young kids on the subject of Samaysar, Panchastikay and basic Jain principles.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

Section: Education

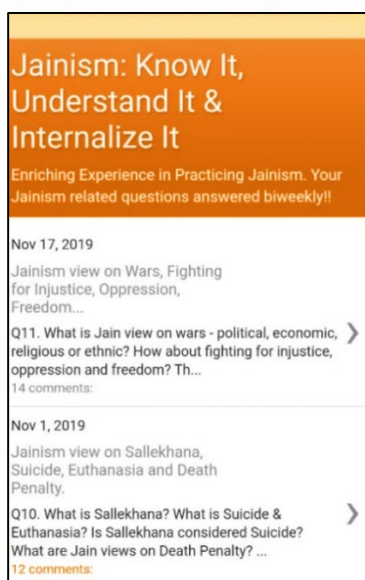
Section Editor: Raj Kumar Jain

Jainism: Know It, Understand It & Internalize It

By Pratiksha Shah

Enriching Experience in Practicing Jainism

This year JAINA Education Committee has launched a new blog called “Jainism: Know It, Understand It & Internalize It”. This blog addresses contemporary challenging questions that are faced by youth, professionals, pathshala students and teachers. There are wide range of questions from, basic to complex ones that involve experiences of modern times on various topics such as **Ahimsa, Rituals, Environmental Impact, Women Equality, Social Issues, Cleanliness, Health and Medicines, Profession/Business, Penance, Philosophy, Literature, and many others.**



The intent of this blog is to deepen individuals' understanding about Jain values/principles, create a positive and enriching experience about the religion, enhance spiritual growth and answer questions for the curious minds who want to understand rather than follow blindly. This blog is written under the guidance of Pravin K. Shah from NC, Chairperson of the JAINA Education Committee. The committee members are from various backgrounds and from various geographic locations within USA and Canada. The current members are: Anitha Prabhu (VA), Birju Doshi (Canada), Krupali Shah (IL), Minal Jayant Shah (IL), Sejal Shah (NC), Shruti Doshi (VA), Vinit Doshi (CT) and Pratiksha Shah (VA).

To begin, the committee documented the guiding principles which includes the fundamental concepts that are very important to understand and to level set the basics of Jainism.

Ahimsa Questions

Ahimsa (non-violence) is the one of the highest principles of Jainism but there are many real-world questions that come into play when practicing Ahimsa. So, the committee decided to address the questions related to Ahimsa first.

The questions are addressed by keeping the aim of religion and spiritual growth in forefront. The responses aid in understanding the values and principles that facilitates answer to those questions, so that individuals can use their own logic and wisdom to derive an answer for themselves. So far, the committee has published responses to the following 11 questions:

- 1) Role of Five Senses
- 2) Is Jainism a Kitchen Religion?
- 3) Condemnation of Other Sects and Religions
- 4) View on Usage and Consumption of Dairy Products
- 5) Himsak Products used in Jain Rituals
- 6) View on Usage of Animals for Medical Research
- 7) Jainism perspective on Alcohol Consumption
- 8) Eating Naturally Dead Animal's Meat
- 9) Jainism view on having a Pet
- 10) Jainism view on Sallekhana, Suicide, Euthanasia, and Death Penalty
- 11) Jainism view on wars - fighting for injustice, oppression, freedom

The responses have provided thought-provoking insights to thousands of people across many countries including USA, India, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Singapore, UAE, Kenya, Germany, Netherlands, Albania, Ukraine, South Korea, Malaysia and New Zealand. There are numerous comments on each post and it has provided a platform for people to share their views and have further dialogue on these challenging topics.

People are conscious, logical, want to do the right thing and use their own wisdom, instead of following anything blindly. Nowadays given technology/internet, people have information at their fingertips. Addressing challenging questions enables in creating a community that follows religion with understanding and experiences its benefits. It is in the spiritual teachings of Jainism, we find meaning, feel connected, thrive and live life in the best possible way.

The Committee plans to continue to address few more questions on Ahimsa, followed by Rituals questions and then other categories like Women Equality, Social Issues, Environmental Impact, Cleanliness, Profession/Business, Philosophy, etc.

Mai Svayam Bhagwan Hun (*I myself am Bhagwan*)

By Dr. Hukam Chand Bharill

(The content of this article is based on a book “Mai Swayam Bhagwan Hun” by Dr. Hukam Chand Bharill, published on April 16, 2000 by Pt. Todermal Trust. The English translation was done by Dr. Anant Kumar Jain, “I myself am Bhagwan”; published on September 30, 2001 by Jain Adhyatma Academy of North America. Edited and written for Jain Digest by Raj Kumar Jain)

The most significant aspect of Jain Philosophy is its pronouncement that *Atma* (soul; self) itself is *Paramatma* (Supreme soul or being or God). Certainly, by its very nature each soul is *Paramatma*: once it knows itself, discovers itself, completely absorbs in itself and fully contemplates upon itself, one achieves the state of *Paramatma*.

The question emerges: if already each soul is *Paramatma*, then what do we mean by “we can achieve the state of *Paramatma*”? And if it is a fact that a soul can become *Paramatma*, then the statement, “it is *Paramatma*” seems to be meaningless because “it is”, and “it can become” are both mutually exclusive.

We are not ready to admit and have not yet realized that we the living, breathing, normally walking, regularly eating, routinely crying and singing souls are *Paramatma*. We are not ready to accept ourselves as *liberated souls* yet. In our minds we have the fixation that if each of us were truly God then why would we suffer and wander around from door to door in pain and suffering? Being drowned in darkness of ignorance, the voice in the head says that we cannot be God and that instead we are helpless living beings; because God is not helpless and a helpless being cannot be God. So in the name of God we have been simply doing *Bhakti* (devotion) and *prayer* rather than putting our efforts into realizing our true nature, our true *self*.

There are two categories of *Bhagwan*. First, the *Arihantas & Siddhas* whose idols we have in our temples, and thru which we offer our prayers and devotion to them. We resolve to follow the path that they have followed, that is our wish. They are called *Karya Paramatma*. The second, the souls, the *Nij-Bhagwan* (self – God) embodied within each of us – they are also *Paramatma* or *Bhagwan*, they are called *Karan-Paramatma*. To know and to recognize the “*self*” (*Nij Bhagwan*) and to deeply contemplate on the self is in essence the worship of God.

It is our prime and pious duty to understand and recognize our own self properly. We need to experience this fact in depth that by nature we are and have always been what we call God – that there is no room for any doubt in this fact. Through the attainment of *Samyak-gyan*, we are able to firmly establish oneness with our own self and completely our knowing faculties deeper and deeper, completely focus, involve and submerge with our own self in it in a meditative state, then even from our present state it will not be long before we become *Paramatma* (Arihant – Siddha: a fully liberated soul).

Samyak-darshan, *Samyak-gyan* and *Samyak-charitra* (right belief, right knowledge, and right conduct) we carve out the true path to *Moksha* (liberation) – they are the only remedy to get rid of the otherwise eternal suffering. Therefore, we must devote our complete energy in understanding them and every moment of our lives in achieving them. We will have to study the true nature of *tattvas* provided in the Jain philosophy; because the true belief in the meaning of seven *tattvas* itself is said to be *Samyak-darshan* (true insight). There are seven *tattvas*: *Jiva* (soul or sentient), *Ajiva* (the insentient), *Ashrava* (karmic influx), *Bandh* (karmic bondage), *Samvara* (stoppage of karmic influx), *Nirjara* (alleviating bound karmas), and *Moksha* (liberation). (In some texts, nine *tattvas* are mentioned; *Paap* and *Punya* are the additional two.)

Jiva-tattva states that *jiva* is eternally *Dravyaroop-Bhagwan* (soul-substance: God), and *Moksha-tattva* (liberation) is the attainment of the pure state of God. For a soul which by its very nature is God, to transform itself from its current *Paryaya* (state or mode) into *Bhagwan* is termed as the attainment of *moksha*. For this very reason the Jain philosophy claims that not only by our nature we are God, but that if we know ourselves, discover the “*self*” within each of us and completely absorb in and contemplate upon the self, then we can experience and achieve the state of *Bhagwan*. Acquainting with the understanding of our self-being leads to true *insight* and *knowledge* (*samyak-darshan* and *samyak-gyan*), and complete steadfastness and submergence in the self provides the right conduct (*samyak-charitra*). Combined pursuit of *Samyak-darshan*, *Samyak gyan* and *Samyak-charitra* as a singular entity is the path for true liberation – *Moksh* – attainment of the “*true bliss*”.

From the depth of our very being, if we are to accept this wonderful, premier fact of Jain Philosophy that by nature we are all *Bhagwan*, a *liberated soul*. By detaching yourself from what is not your true self and from the apparent *panyaya* (state) you are in, try to focus on the substantiality of your own *true nature*. Then you will come to realize what kind of revolution you experience in your internal being, what sort of wonderful and lasting peace you enjoy and what a remarkable stream of joy will emerge from and flow across your eternal being. True to your heart, devote yourself completely in reverence to your inner being, then see what flows.

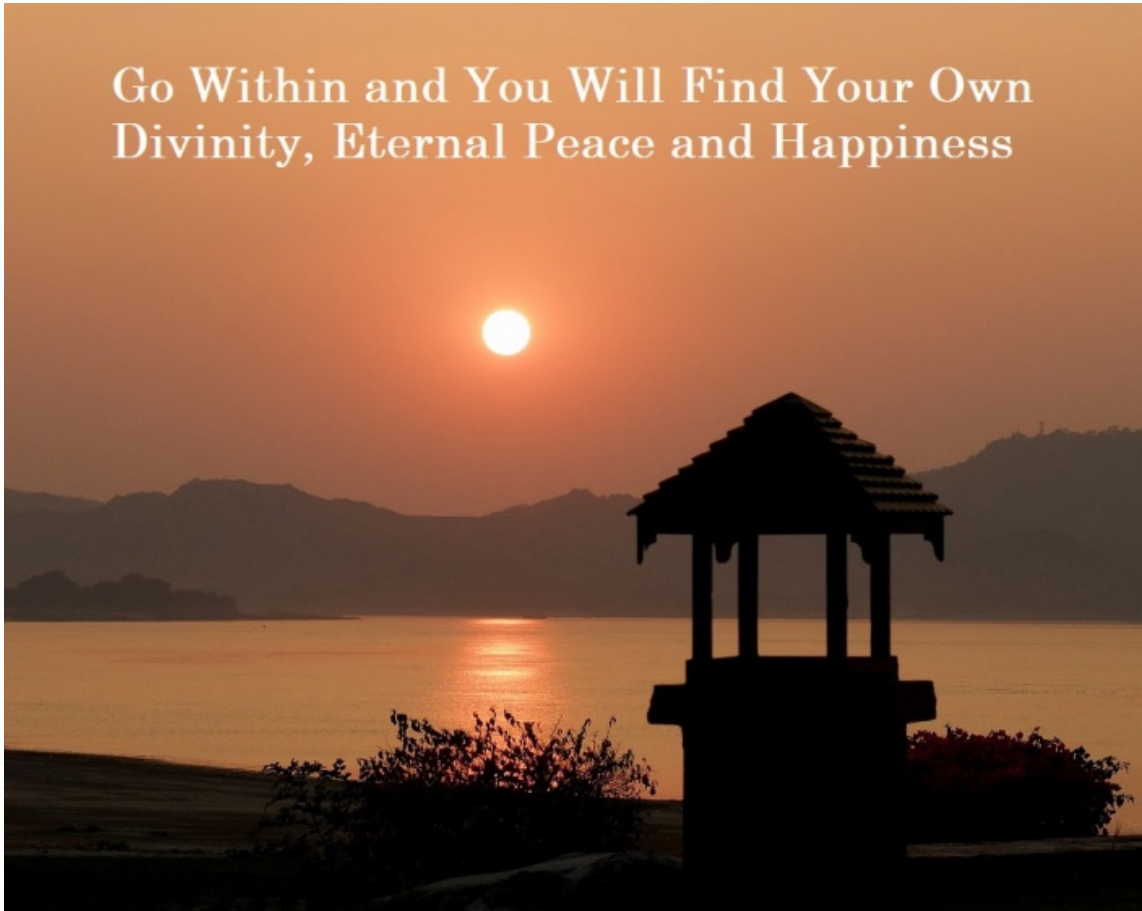
May all *souls* soon attain eternal peace and happiness by acquiring real knowledge and acquaintance of their own divinity and by completely devoting and submerging into their true *self*.

About the Author



Dr. Hukam Chand Bharill is a learned scholar of Jainism. He holds a MA degree in literature and PhD from University of Indore in Jainism. He has been bestowed with several titles and honorary degrees, such as Vidhyavachaspati, Vanivibhushana, Adhyatma Shiromani, Mahmaopadhyaya, Nyaytirth, etc. The prime Minister of India awarded him the title of Jain Ratna in India and the same was awarded by Acharya Shri Sushil Kumarji in USA. On July 23, 2005 a Joint Commission of all Jain sects (Swetamber, Digamber, Sthanakwasi and Tehrapanthi) awarded Dr. H. Bharill a title of Vidhya Varadhi.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>



(Image by Jose Luis Garcia Miranda from Pixabay)

Section: Information

Section Editor: Giriraj Jain

JAINA Committee 2019-2021 Update

JAINA has multiple committees to provide continuing services to the community to achieve the goals and objectives of the Federation. The JAINA Executive Committee approves the scope and charter of each committee. Each committee has a chairperson that is responsible for the operation of the committee as well as reporting to the president, planning and budgeting. The following is a recent committee update from JAINA.

Ombudsman Council (all are Past Presidents):

- Ashok Domadia of Milpitas, CA - Council Chair
- Prem Jain of San Francisco, CA - Council Member
- Dr. Sushil Jain of Washington DC - Council Member
- Lata Champsee of Toronto, Canada - Council Member
- Dilip Shah of Philadelphia, PA - Council Member

Directors-at-large:

- Manubhai Shah of Los Angeles, CA
- Prabodh Vaidya of Burr Ridge, IL
- Dr. Shirish Patrawala of New Jersey, NJ

Newly formed Committees:

- Archives Committee Chair- Keerti Shah of Bartlett, IL
- Jain Connect Committee* Co-Chairs- Piyush Gandhi of Rolling Meadows, IL and Sheenika Gandhi of Brea, CA
- Population Survey Committee Co-Chairs- Paurav Vora of New Jersey, NJ and Rajendra Kumar of Piscataway, NJ
- Seniors Committee Co-Chairs- Surjit Kaji of Fremont, CA and Bahart Kothari of Streamwood, IL

New Committee Chairs:

- Academic Scholarship Committee# - Atul Shah of Naperville, IL
- Calendar Committee - Jayana Shah of Los Angeles, CA
- Convention Committee - Haresh Shah of Delaware
- Fundraising Committee@ - Yogesh Shah of Los Angeles, CA
- Interfaith Activities Committee^ - Dr. Mukesh Doshi of Schaumburg, IL
- Jain Center Liaison Committee - Vipul Shah of Palatine, IL
- Jain Digest Committee - Dilip Parekh of Los Angeles, CA

- Long Range Planning Committee - Chintan Shah of New York, NY
- Membership Committee - Rohit Doshi of Collegeville, PA
- PR & Media Committee - Savita Jain of Washington, DC
- Technology Committee - Girish Shah of San Jose, CA
- VRG Memorial Committee - Kamlesh Shah of Rockville, MD
- Wellness Committee - Jayana Shah of Los Angeles, CA

Following existing Committee Chairs continuing in this term:

- Academic Bowl Committee - Shweta Daftary of Dallas, TX
- Academic Liasion Committee - Dr. Sulekh Jain of Henderson, NV
- Ahimsak Eco-Vegan Committee - Dr. Jina Shah of Berkeley, CA
- Awards Committee - Dr. Nitin Shah of La Miranda, CA
- Constitution Review Committee - Dilip Shah of Philadelphia, PA
- Education Committee - Pravin Shah of Raleigh, NC
- Election Committee - Anop Vora of Rochester, NY
- Governmental and International Public affairs Committee - Prakash Mehta of Herndon, VA
- Jain Diaspora Committee - Dr. Manish Mehta of Ann Arbor, MI
- Jivdaya Committee - Ketan Sheth of Tulsa, OK
- Jain Youth Exchange Program Committee - Kamlesh Mehta of Sunnyvale, CA
- Media Production Committee - Dr. Mamata Shaha of New York
- Overseas Relations Committee - Dilip Shah of Philadelphia, PA
- Pilgrimage Committee - Arvind Shah of Detroit, MI
- Uplifting Underprivileged Jains Committee - Kamlesh Mehta of Sunnyvale, CA
- Women Empowerment Committee - Dr. Mamata Shaha of New York
- World Community Service Committee - Bachubhai Ajmera of Ashton, MD
- World Council of Jains Committee^ - Nikhil Bumb of Plainsboro , NJ

** Jain Connect committee replaces two committees Jain Milan and Jain Network Forum.*

Loan Program Committee is now merged with Academic Scholarship committee

@ Patron Program is now merged with Fundraising committee

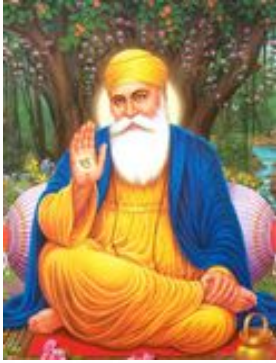
^ Interfaith Committee is now separated from World Council of Jains

The first JAINA BOD meeting of the 2019-2021 board was held from November 8th to 10th at Siddhachalam in New Jersey. Many Directors, Committee Chairs, Jain Center Presidents and Executive Committee members participated in the meeting. The presentations made by various committees during BOD meeting can be reviewed at <https://www.jaina.org/page/BODMeetingPresentation1921>

Harmony between Jains and Sikhs

By Dr. Harvinder Singh Sahota (Laguna Beach, CA) and Dr. Sulekh C. Jain (Las Vegas, NV)

On November 12, 2019, the whole world celebrated the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji; an apostle of Peace, harmony, coexistence and respect between all religions and human beings. Same day India and Pakistan Governments inaugurated the opening of the Kartapur Sahib Corridor connecting the two holiest Sikh Shrines in India and Pakistan. This has already enabled thousands of devotees to go freely to the Holy places easily.



Jainism is one of the oldest and Sikhism the youngest religions of the World. In terms of population Sikhism is the 5th largest and Jainism the 6th largest in the world. Both religions are minority in India.

There is so much in common between Jainism and Sikhism. Since the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Sikhism, Jains and Sikhs have been working and walking together. This is a living and true example of Interfaith dialog, Interdependence, Coexistence, Respect, Cooperation, Sharing, Caring and Helping each other. In this brief article, we provide a quick glimpse of this rich and impressive history (past and present).

Lot of history of Jains and Sikhs are inter-twined. 2,600 years ago, Bhagwan Mahavir was born in Bihar and Jainism flourished in Bihar. Patna (Bihar) is where lot of Sikh history was made. Guru Teg Bahadur and Guru Govind Singh Ji lived in Patna. Guru Govind Singh Ji was born in Patna (Bihar).



350 years ago, Mr. Salis Rai Johri, a prominent Jain in Patna hosted Guru Teg Bahadur Ji (Sikh's 9th Guru) and his family on his way to Assam. Wife of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, Mata Gujri stayed with this Jain family for several years. In this Jain household Guru Govind Singh Ji (the 10th Guru of Sikh's) was born and grew up to the age of 6.

Later this Jain family donated a piece of land for the dharamshala and eventually the Sri Patna Sahib Takht (a Sikh Holy place and place of worship) was built there. This same Jain Johri also built a Jain Temple next door. The Jain temple and Sikh Gurudwara on the same land next to each other in the same campus just separated by a simple wall are a unique example of respect for each other.



Sikhs and Jains have never harmed, quarreled or destroyed each other's places of worship. In Punjab, Jains attend Sikh colleges and Sikhs attend Jain Colleges. Jains and Sikhs working together made Ludhiana a hosiery capital of the world. Some Jain Sadhus/monks have come from Sikh families and in Punjab, Jain sadhus often stay at Sikh homes and also get their gochari (food) from them. Punjabi University Patiala has a Dept. of Jainology.

Here is another very touching and hair raising example: Nearly 300 years ago, a Muslim ruler in Punjab killed 2 sons of Guru Govind Singh Ji; the 10th Guru of the Sikhs by 'burying' them alive into a brick wall. When the Muslim ruler refused to grant them even a small piece of land for the cremation, it was a Jain (Todar Mal Jain) in that town who rose to the occasion and bought a small piece of land with his gold coins for their cremation

Jains served Sikh Maharajas in important Positions. All Sikh Maharajas in their ruled states in Punjab (Patiala, Nabha, Frikot, Jind etc.) employed Jains in very important and trust worthy positions such as Treasurers etc. because of the Jains trust and honesty.

Jains and Sikhs have not only co-existed but have provided safety and shelters to each other. Examples: Migration of Jains and Sikhs from Pakistan in 1947 and the protection provided by a Jain Acharya.

Celebration of Diwali - Jains for nirvan of Bhagwan Mahavir and Sikhs for release of Guru Hargovind Ji from Gwalior Fort is celebrated same day all over India.



(A Jain Sadhus/monk at the Procession of Maharaja Ranjit Singh)

Ahimsa (nonviolence) is the core Principle of Jains. Jains are known by the practice of Ahimsa in all their professions and walks of life. Sikhs Practice Ahimsa by Seva (Service to others) to the needy and afflicted in distress and in natural and manmade calamities and their practice of free langars (since last 550 years) throughout the world is the hallmark of Sikh tradition.

Both Jains and Sikhs have no caste system and stand for equal rights and respect for all humans including women. Both Jainism and Sikhism are least known and most misunderstood in the West. As a result, Sikhs often become victim of hate and terrorism and their Gurudwaras and followers are attacked and killed often.

Academic study of Jainism and Sikhism has significantly lagged behind of other Indic religions in North America. Jain and Sikh Community leaders are closing this gap by establishing Centers for Jain and Sikh Studies. These initiatives are Unique and historical in Nature. They are emulating Takht Sri Patna Sahib at Loyola Marymount University, LA, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, Europe, International School for Jain Studies, India (working with Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar), Jain and Sikh Studies Chairs at University of California at Irvine, Riverside and Santa Barbara. A comprehensive book on interdependence of Jain and Sikhs is being planned. This is just a beginning; many more to come.

Here is one very inspiring example of working together. Five years ago, Jain and Sikh community in Los Angeles established the first joint Center for study and teaching of Jainism and Sikhism at Loyola Marymount University. After a thorough search, Dr. Niranjana Kaur Khalsa, a Sikh scholar with PhD in Sikhism from University of Michigan was hired as the professor for this Center. Right away Jains and Sikhs liked and welcomed her appointment. Professor Khalsa taught classes in Jainism and Sikhism with separate syllabi. She taught both the religions with equal love, sincerity, passion, dedication and high scholastic contents. Her classes were not only full but there many were students on waiting list. She took her students each semester to the Jain and Sikh temple in Los Angeles. Students liked her very much too. Her performance was beyond our expectation.



By working together and learning from each other; these Centers are working to tear down even the symbolic walls that separate them. We are sure; there are hundreds of such opportunities all around us waiting to be explored and started.

"Water is the same in all. Only utensils are of different colors." Sant Kabir

Let us work together even more to learn from the beauties of each tradition and dismantle all the walls of hatred and mistrust. This is the real and true message of Guru Nanak Dev Ji !!



H. Sahota MD, FACC, FSCAI

Inventor of the Perfusion Angioplasty Balloon. Performed First Angioplasty in India, Mexico, Moscow and Ukraine. Authored chapters of books, research papers and subject of Two Biography books ie 1. Hero of American Heart 2004 2. Straight from the Heart 2017



Sulekh Jain, Ph.D. is the Past Secretary and President of the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA). He also authored a book **"An Ahimsa Crisis: You Decide"**, which can be accessed as an eBook free of charge at www.jsjs.in For further information, please contact Sulekh via email: scjain@earthlink.net

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

Switzerland Law Prohibiting Inhumane Practice of Boiling Lobsters Alive

A new law came into effect as of March 2018 in Switzerland that ended the common culinary practice of throwing lobsters (Crustaceans family) into boiling water while they are still alive. The law also prohibited transportation of live marine crustaceans like lobsters on ice or in icy water, ruling instead that they should “always be held in their natural environment”.

Old belief: Crustaceans don't feel pain

The practice of boiling lobsters alive is going on for centuries with the assumption that Crustaceans and insects have simple nervous systems and neither have brains so they do not process and feel pain.

The idea that non-human animals might not feel pain goes back to the 17th-century where it was argued that animals do not experience pain and suffering because they lack consciousness. This argument was challenged by British philosopher and social reformist, Jeremy Bentham, back in 1789, with the following often quoted words: "The question is not, 'can they reason' nor 'can they talk'; but, can they suffer?" But the practice and belief that animals don't feel pain continued.

21st Century experiment: Crustaceans do feel pain

With the advancement in science and scientific understanding of pain, two key components evolved as describing the pain. The first one is nociception – that is the ability to detect noxious stimuli which evoke a reflex response that rapidly moves the parts or whole of the body away from the source of stimulus. The second component describing the pain is experience of pain - suffering. For example, when a human being touches a hot surface, they quickly remove their hand away from the hot surface, this is a reflex. That happens right when you touch the surface; while the suffering comes later as an effect of touching the hot surface, like burn. It is now widely accepted that pain is a private and emotional experience and cannot be measured externally. But pain invokes a level of learning therefore preventing animals from repeatedly exposing themselves to potential injury, hence reflecting on painful stimuli.

In 2009, Elwood and Mirjam Appel showed that hermit crabs make motivational trade-offs between electric shocks and the quality of the shells they inhabit. In particular, as hermit crabs are shocked more intensely, they become increasingly willing to leave their current shells for new shells, and they spend less time deciding whether to enter those new shells. Moreover, because the researchers did not offer the new shells until after the electrical stimulation had ended, the change in motivational behavior was the result of memory of the noxious event, not an immediate reflex. It was also shown that hermit crabs experiencing increasing electric shocks left their shells at a reduced intensity when the shell was from a less preferred species than did those in shells of a more desirable species. This demonstrates that hermit crabs are willing to risk predator attack by evacuating their shells to avoid a noxious stimulus and that this is dependent upon how valuable the shell is.

A similar study shows that hermit crabs are less likely to leave their shells after electric shock if they are in an environment that contains the odor of predators. This shows the crabs trade-off the motivation to avoid electric shocks and predator avoidance.

Appeal to the world

Austria, New Zealand, Norway, some Australian states and territories and in some cities of Europe, and recently joined by Switzerland in 2018, crustaceans are protected in these many places under animal welfare act and are subject legal action if treated inhumanely including boiling alive. We appeal to the entire world to take the necessary steps to stop the inhumane practice of boiling crustaceans alive to reduce the pain and suffering these insects have to go through. Let us stop this cruel practice immediately and help these animals out of the misery.

You can also do your part to stop this practice by supporting an [online petition](#) by [Crustacean Compassion](#) to prevent this inhumane practice in UK.

Section: Inspiration

Section Editor: Reena Shah

The Radical Power of Humility – Part 2

By Nipun Mehta

(This is a part 2 of the transcript of an address at the 2015 JAINA Convention in Atlanta, delivered by Nipun Mehta. Nipun is the founder of ServiceSpace.org, a nonprofit that works at the intersection of gift-economy, technology and volunteerism. Part 1, in which Nipun explains the importance and power of Humility, was published in the October issue of Jain Digest.)

Today, then, I want to share three progressive doorways of power that humility opens up.

The first doorway is the power of many

In the absence of humility, we forget the shoulders that we stand on, and foolishly begin to take singular credit for what we're doing. I remember my mom telling me a parable from the Mahabharata. A dog is traveling on Krishna's chariot, and lo and behold, when the dog wagged its tail to the right, the chariot turned to the right. And when he wagged it left, the chariot turned to the left. It was an example of correlation, not causation, and it would have been nothing short of ludicrous for the dog to actually believe it was controlling the chariot with its tail. Yet, that is precisely how our arrogance deceives us. We forget that behind each one of us lies an invisible stream of conditions that supports our every move.

Growing up, I had certainly forgotten that wisdom. I started out doing all the "right things": did well in high school, got into UC Berkeley, landed a prestigious job in Silicon Valley. Then, in my early twenties I left the corporate world, and started ServiceSpace. My television debut was a half an hour interview on CNN. People celebrated my accomplishments, and initially I believed I deserved the credit. But over time, I realized that I was just a dog on the chariot. The ego is ever-ready to build a story around our exclusive special-ness. Whether it's about worldly achievement or even service, pride comes in one flavor. And our world, unfortunately, encourages this. Slowly, though, I started seeing the long series of cascading conditions that had to conspire even just for me to stand here today. How could I possibly think that this is all my doing?

New science is now pointing to the power of many. We have a greater impact on each other than we think. Studies have shown that the strongest influence on someone's behavior is -- their friend's behavior. According to groundbreaking research by Harvard's Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, happiness loves company -- it spreads virally, in a network. So does obesity, cancer, and even divorce. If you have a divorced friend, you are 147% more likely to divorce yourself. So if you want to stay married, we have to work on strengthening your friend's marriages. I try to tell my wife that if she wants me to get into shape, she needs to get my brother and mother on the treadmill. :) And it works the same way for philanthropy, kindness, and good news too. Everything we do ripples out and affects each strand in the web of our connections.



With this understanding, a significant insight emerges: *everyone* matters, and everyone has something to give. And if we organize around leveraging people's gifts we begin to create breakthrough possibilities. I recently met a guy named V. R. Feroze. He had turned around a Fortune 500 company's R&D department, and by age 36, had 5000 employees working for him. He married his college sweetheart, became a father and one devastating day, he and his wife learned that their son, Vivaan was on the autism spectrum. They were shattered by the news, but in the crucible of their despair, Feroze and his wife forged their life's calling. As Feroze succinctly put it, "I want to change the world for Vivaan, and my wife wants to change Vivaan for the world."

Soon after, they launched many successful projects. Feroose looked deeply into the unique gifts of the autistic population. Well, if you're autistic, you are never bored, and you never lie. Feroose looked at those traits, and then took a revolutionary leap -- he hired 5 autistic staff at his Fortune 500 Company, and then matched them with roles that allowed their gifts to shine. It was a huge success. The new staffers excelled at their jobs. News of their contributions reached the CEO of the company and he was so moved that he announced that, by 2020, 1% of their 65 thousand world-wide staff would be people on the autism spectrum. "That day a friend came into my office and said, Vivaan has just created 650 jobs. I had tears in my eyes," Feroose remembers. Now, the UN is exploring a mandate to inspire other Fortune 500 countries to do the same.

All this transpired because Feroose understood that the best way to support his special child was to help create a world that supports the specialness of others, and to build a community that thrives on the belief that everybody is good at something. Tapping into people's gifts can't be done by brute force or authority. It takes a heart of humility. It takes deeply trusting the synergy of our inter-connections, and understanding the power of many.

The second doorway that humility opens is the power of one

Last year, I had the pleasure of spending some time with Francois Pienaar, a rugby legend who was very close to Nelson Mandela -- and famously played by Matt Damon in the movie "Invictus". As he shared many personal encounters with Mandela, the thing that struck me was how practically every story spoke to Mandela's humility.

One of the most pivotal moments in Francois's life came when he visited Mandela's jail cell on Robben Island. Holding his arms out, he said, "This is what how much space he lived in, for 27 straight years. I grew up thinking he was a terrorist. All Afrikaners did. And yet he came out of jail with an open heart that can hold everyone." Indeed, Mandela's first words, after being released from jail: "I stand here before you not as a prophet, but a humble servant." Humble. Servant.

A telling example of Mandela's servant leadership came in 1995. Amidst rampant civil tensions that were taking hundreds of lives, he had come to power as the first democratically elected President of South Africa. That also happened to be the year that the country's rugby team was winning a lot. With millions cheering on, many South Africans saw this as a symbolic opportunity to signal the end of Apartheid; they were eager to change the team name, colors and jersey in a sport that was widely considered a "white man's game". Mandela, on the other hand, saw a different opportunity. An opportunity for forgiveness. He went from sport clubs to town halls to rally his countrymen to take the higher road: "We have to surprise them with compassion, with restraint and generosity; I know, all of the things they denied us, but this is no time to celebrate petty revenge."

That was the thing about Mandela. He had the audacity to believe in each person's capacity to transform their suffering into love. He had done it himself. Where the power of many teaches us that everyone is good at something, the power of one points to our unbounded capacity for inner transformation. Everyone can find greatness in love.

They kept the same name, same jersey, same colors. Springboks in green. That year South Africa makes it to the finals, where they faced New Zealand. At the end of regulation, it's tied 12-12. Overtime. An epic game. And South Africa wins the World Cup, for the first time in the country's history! Mandela humbly comes out onto the field, not in a Presidential suit, but wearing a green Springboks jersey -- what many considered the "uniform of the enemy." The 65 thousand person crowd spontaneously erupts into a chant: Nelson, Nelson, Nelson! It was electric. "Never seen so many grown men cry," players later said. The crowd later goes on to sing "Shoooo--shaaaa--llooooo--aaaaa" -- a Zulu song that Mandela had often sung to himself while in jail. In that moment, an entire nation stood united under Mandela's leadership -- and his love.

In the concluding trophy presentation, as Mandela handed the trophy to Francois, he whispered to him: "Thank you for what you have done for the country." Francois paused, deeply moved. And then spontaneously came his response, to the man he had once thought of as a terrorist, "Thank you, Madiba, for what you have done for the world."

Mandela shook the world, not through the might of his ego, or his considerable skills, but through his breathtaking capacity for inner transformation and humility. He believed in the power of one, he embodied that power of one, and showed us how it is a force beyond measure.

The third, and subtlest, doorway of humility is the power of zero



I recently met a 96 year old Sufi saint named Dada Vaswani. He has a great many followers around the world, is highly respected by monks and nuns from various traditions, and radiates a profound sense of peace. I was deeply grateful to meet him. But his first words to me were, "I'm so grateful to have met you." It wasn't just a pleasantry, he really meant it. And it wasn't because he thought I was special -- he just knew that *everyone* is special. Because everyone is connected to everything, and the whole show is sacred.

Everything about him, and around him, was humble. When we met, in his private study room, we sat on simple, white plastic chairs. Another plastic table stood flimsily between us. You could tell these surface trappings didn't matter to him. The way he carried himself,

the words he shared, the kindness he emanated, it empowered me and everyone around him -- empowered us, not to be bigger, grander, *somebodies*... but rather to be small, simple, *nobodies*.

Dada shared that his own teacher was once asked who he was. "Are you a poet? Are you an educationist? Author? Saint?" He responded with, 'I am a zero.' Then he paused for a while and added, 'I'm not the English zero -- the English zero occupies space. I am the Sindhi 'Nukta'. In Sindhi, zero is written like a dot. So that was the ideal placed before me.'

When we succeed in radically downsizing the 'I', we find true expansion. It is when we shrink our preoccupation with self, that far greater energies course through us. We no longer attempt to drive change in the world, but rather to "be" that change we wish to see. St Francis's prayer was not, "Make me CEO of your peace". It was make me a *channel* of your peace. And to be a channel, is to understand the true power of being zero.

At one point in our conversation, I asked Dada about his plans for the future. He's 96 and the spiritual leader of millions, so the succession plan is a natural concern for many. Yet, his response was unequivocal: "Oh, that's not my concern. I'm not the one making this happen now, and it won't be me in the future. I just try to be zero." He had given a lifetime to this work, and yet was not trying to control its future. He knew his job was to simply - be an instrument.

To probe into this idea of being an instrument, of being zero, I asked him about Bodhisattvas. Similar to Jinas in Jainism, Buddhists define Bodhisattvas as beings who forsake their own liberation for the sake of others. He paused for moment, locked eyes with mine and recited a poem by Shantideva. One deliberate word after another.

*May I be a guard for those who need protection,
A guide for those on the path,
A boat, a raft, a bridge for those who wish to cross the flood.
May I be a lamp in the darkness,
A resting place for the weary,
A healing medicine for all who are sick,
A vase of plenty, a tree of miracles;
And for the boundless multitudes of living beings,
May I bring sustenance and awakening,*

*Enduring like the earth and sky
Until all beings are freed from sorrow,
And all are awakened.*

His voice died into silence, and no words could describe the electric feeling in the room. My heart was overflowing with gratitude. With whatever limited humility I was capable of, I asked, "Dada, how may I be of service to you?" Then, he did something that blew me away. He cupped his two hands in front of me, as if holding out a begging bowl, and gently said, "I request your tears of compassion."

Long pause. This time, on my account. No questions were arising, no answers were arising. We just gazed into each other's eyes. Finally I managed to get a few words out, "I'll do my best, Dada," I said. When Dada asked for my tears of compassion, what he was pointing to is the power of zero – that capacity to be an empty vessel, so that compassion's flood can effortlessly surge through you. And it all begins with the wisdom of humility.

In conclusion, I want to end with a story of a friend and a wonderful person, Shakkuben.



Shakkuben spent most of her life working as a school janitor in India. One day, however, she had this beautiful wish arise in her heart: I want to serve. Immediately after, she had another thought: what can I possibly give? A friend told her a story of how Gandhi had once lost a very small pencil, and he was looking everywhere for it. When someone told him, "Bapu, you're the father of the nation; you don't have time to look for a small pencil, here's a dozen more," Gandhi simply replied, "But a child had given me that pencil with a lot of love," and carried on the

search for the pencil. For Gandhi, size of love mattered a lot more than the size of the pencil. And Shakkuben took this to heart, and started her own experiment in service. Everyday, she would sift through the trash at her school, look for those small pencils that others had thrown away, and give them to people who couldn't even afford that much. And for her, it wasn't about the pencils but the love that they'd be wrapped in.

One day, after breakfast at home, Shakkuben offers me a parting gift. A slightly-ripped pink plastic bag, I still vividly remember it. Her first collection of those small pencils. I was so touched, I couldn't even open it in front of her. I had another event that morning, and I couldn't resist sharing her story there. As a show-and-tell, I opened that pink bag, put my hand in, and held out a fist full of small pencils, broken erasers, blunt sharpeners. Oh, man. It wasn't just the pencils ... it was what they were wrapped in. The love of this humble janitor. I couldn't hold back my tears.

When our gifts to the world are draped in such humility and reverence, an unspeakable thunder roars behind those rain drops. And this is precisely what Jainism invites us to do. Bow to all life, *Ahimsa*; bow to others points of view, *Anekantvad*; bow to our inter-connection, *Aparigraha*.

When we bow to all that is, we reframe our understanding of success and accomplishment. We discover that everyone is good at something. That anyone can find greatness in giving, and that each is connected to all. We know then that our job is simply to be like the sparrow, and do our little bit to hold up the sky. Like my young friend who broke a piece of bread and offered up that bite, may we always strive to serve one another in small ways. And to hold a piece of each others' prayers.



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

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

My Inspiration - Param Pujya Pappaji (Prem Acharyaji)

By Reena Shah

રાત માં જેમ, શોભાયમાન ચાંદ,

અજ્ઞાન રૂપ અંધકાર માં, ગુરુ તમારું સ્થાન!!

(The way the moon shines in the night, a guru's place is where ignorance in the form of darkness prevails)

– (A poem from Ananya Parivartan magazine)



“ આત્મા ની પરમ શુદ્ધતા તેનું નામ મોક્ષ છે ” - પ્રેમ આચાર્યજી

(The ultimate purification of soul is called Moksh)

I had always believed as a young adult that moksh was a place where one would go to after one attained enlightenment or kewal gyan. However, this statement left me wondering but also piqued my curiosity to know more. Once I delved deeper into the *vachan*, it hit me that moksh was not a place but was the purest state of soul and that we did not need to go anywhere to attain it. After coming in contact with Param Pujya Pappaji, not only did I learn this but also the means to attain that state and the *purusharth* one would need to do this.

Parampujya Pappaji's very simple but powerful personality pulled me close to him and struck a chord in my very first meeting with him in Mumbai at his residence. I witnessed his *prem bhaav*, innocence, *maitribhaav*, and *karuna* in the

hour that I spent at his home in his presence. He is an epitome of compassion and love, flowing with practicality, friendly, serious yet fun loving, elderly yet spry, straightforward yet mysterious, simple yet inspiring.

Writing about Pappaji is like showing light to the Sun. Though I have known him only for the last 5 years, my life has turned around 180 degrees and there is a new found purpose, joy and meaning to my human life now. How has this *Gyaani* inspired so many *mumukshus*? It is a paradox when I say that thousands of followers have been inspired by him when he really does not care about increasing his followers. He firmly believes in strictly doing *purusharth* and following *guru aagna*.

A staunch devotee of Shrimad Rajchandra, founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Atma Tatva Research Center in Parli village near Mumbai, Param Pujya Pappaji, is an embodiment of *Vitraag dasha*. He lives in the midst of his family and *mumukshus*, but is fully detached as he repeatedly tells us that we all need to do full justice to our family and friends with *prem bhaav* in order to pay off the previous debts with these people from previous lives. All his followers feel a sense of oneness with him as he never discriminates against anyone. Because of his innocent nature, friendship with the entire world flows in his blood. Although he possesses vast knowledge of scriptures, keen observation of human nature, he still never takes ownership of anything. He always tells all his followers to consider Krupalu Dev as their guru and that there is no one bigger than Krupalu Dev. It always showed his humility and modesty. *Mumukshus*' spiritual upliftment blossoms in his presence. Thousands of *mumukshus* came to know and surrendered their life to Krupalu Dev through him. He always emphasizes the fact that it is of utmost importance to know Krupalu Dev first and foremost and consider him the real guru. His humility is so touching and rare.

Once I asked Pappaji “I miss you so much that I sometimes start crying while missing you.”

Pujyashree responded, “When one soul loves another soul with a true heart, then when you miss that someone, you are bound to feel emotional and get eyes wet. And if a *jeev* truly knows someone well, then also your eyes could get wet”. Such is his power that people staying far from him also experience oneness with him.

Mumukshus tirelessly listen to Pujyashree's *bodhvachan* and never want it to end. Most of the time, people's questions for Pujyashree get answered automatically while listening to him. The beauty of talking to a *gyani* is that even if people talk about their world (*sansaar*) or worldly questions, the conversation will always end with *parmaarth*.

Here is a glimpse of his bodh vachan: <https://youtu.be/YbsePcSO1oM>

There were times when I personally found it difficult to follow ethical code in all situations especially in current times when people take advantage of others for being honest and fair. But when I shared my dilemma with Param Pujya Pappaji he asked me, “what is yours that someone will take from you? The only thing you have is your soul and it is good if people take advantage and take away the unwanted things.” It was a profound response that shook me up and opened my eyes to the fact that what I was considering “mine” was not mine and was intended to be taken away. Pujyashri’s guidance, compassion, love, and karuna bhaav helped me to move in the right direction with right understanding, instead of blindly following the concept.

તમારા માં થી પ્રેમ ઉભરાય છે, જળ હોય કે જીવ, એમાં ભીજાય છે,
તમારી હર એક હરકત માં છે પ્રેમ, ક્યારે કરીશ પ્રેમ હૂં તમારી જેમ?
– (Ananya Parivartan magazine)

This unconditional and pure love humbled me into improving my spiritual efforts that I was lacking previously. His guidance has sparked an awareness that stays with me in all the decisions I make.

Driven by compassion and vision, Prem Acharyaji established Shrimad Raj Chandra Atma Tatva Research Centre in 2004 to undertake socio-economic development of the most backward and undeveloped areas in and around Parli (Sudhagadh District) near Mumbai in the fields of education, public Health and women empowerment. This was initiated in view of the glaring cases of child-labor, early marriage of the girl child, tolerance to unhygienic surroundings and a dearth of education and employment avenues. Some of these initiatives that have tremendously helped the underprivileged people in and around Parli are: Shree Raj Educational Centre, Shree Raj Medical Centre, Shramik Naari Sangh, and Shree Raj Roti Centre.

Check out <https://vitraagvigyaan.org/home/activity> for more information.

Shree Raj Educational Centre provides quality education to the underprivileged tribal and rural children at the school in Parli and is the first school with medium of instruction in English in the entire Taluka.



Prior to starting the school in 2003, young children were made to work in neighboring breweries. The situation of girl children was worse, where they had to take care of the entire house and their siblings to get trained and married off at a very young age. There was a lack of even basic Infrastructure & Facilities, let alone educational opportunities.

The school started with a modest beginning of teaching a few children under a temporary shed under a tree. With support from well-wishers, today over 900 children are being educated at the school and their educational expenses including uniforms, books, educational kits, meals as well as transport are being provided for, through the Centre.

Shramik Naari Sangh undertakes economic empowerment of women by providing employment and training opportunities to women in tiffin services and food products and **Shree Raj Roti Centre** is a program that provides food to poor, needy, unwell, and old people.



One of the initiatives of Shramik Naari Sangh, Chaakri, Khakhra gives employment to underprivileged (battered, homeless, abused, poor) women who do not even have food to eat sometimes. Chaakri innovatively tapped the one inherent skill of the Indian woman – Rolling round Rotis – and designed a holistic business model that provided stable employment and income to less-privileged women in a safe and secure work environment.

More About Prem Acharyaji (Source: <https://www.vitraagvigyaan.org/home/inspiration>)

Shree Prem Acharyaji, fondly known to all as Param Pujya Pappaji, has been an enterprising individual since youth and tasted success early in business with exposure to diverse industries during 1950-1970.

He founded the Asiatic Group of companies in the year 1955, at a young age of 25, when he started India's first factory to manufacture zinc chloride at Kolkata. His vision and business acumen directed the expansion of business that raised the manufacturing facilities of the company to 11 factories spread across the country. He introduced his innovation of special battery grade "ZINC CHLORIDE" to several European companies, and Asiatic Chemicals emerged as the sole supplier to leading Dry-Cell battery manufacturers of India, enjoying a monopoly for 40 years.

Endowed with an exemplary thinking power, he infiltrated into the depths of reasons behind his existence and success. His deep contemplation on his success - whether it was his intellect, his hard work, his destiny or God's special choice - unfolded his spiritual side.

Shree Prem Acharyaji, not the one to believe in religion blindly, put himself to several tests and believed things only after experimenting. He realized that Lord Mahavir's identity for the past 2000 years has unfortunately been restricted as the 24th Tirthankara and His scriptures have appealed largely only to Jains across the globe.

Shree Prem Acharyaji munificently makes the appeal that the research of Self-realized Souls is universally applicable and can be the source of divine peace for everyone. He reiterates that the universal and scientific findings of Mahavir should not be the proprietary right of a select few, and the rest of the world should not remain deprived of this great soul's purest influence. His revolutionary statement – "The world knows Mr. Mahavir but not Bhagwan Mahavir" - amazed people, forcing them to revisit their approach towards Jainism.

His profound knowledge on 'karma science' made him emerge as a highly revered spiritual soul. Shree Prem Acharyaji's timeless contribution to the world extends through re-awakening of 'Vitraag Vigyaan', which has made multitudes experience the depths of silence, bliss and peace. Despite this unique Kshayopsham (thinking power), he is one who does not encourage blind faith but inspires seekers to think, experience and then have faith in the philosophy.

His spiritual experience is captured in various CDs/DVDs and Books published through Spiritual Impressions Pvt. Ltd. Glimpses of his vast knowledge are reflected in his books '*Mahavir na bodh ne patra kaun*', '*Apurva Vichar*', '*Paribhraman ni sampoorna ahuti*', '*Samyak Darshan Ka Niwas*' and '*Swachand*'.

A truly insightful personality, he is an inspiration to the modern generation in harmonizing the materialistic and spiritual worlds. He has sown the seed of Shrimad Rajchandra Atma Tatva Research Centre to spread the universal message of self-liberation through Vitraag Vigyaan for Self-Realization!

Under his guiding vision, the Trust has been recipient of Best Management of an NGO award. Spiritual discourses are conducted all across the world having centres at USA, Dubai, London, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Jabalpur, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Dhule, etc.



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

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

Section: Transformation

Section Editor: Ramesh Khandhar

Transformational Maun Sadhana Shibir

by Ramesh Khandhar

Bhaktiyogacharya P.P.A B. Shri Yashovijay Suriiji Maharaj Saheb of the Shvetamber sect is a spiritual master. In most of his discourses he talks about transforming mundane thoughts into spiritual thought leading to self-realization. He has been conducting five day Maun Sadhana Shibir in various reclusive places in India. About 700 mumukshus attend the shibir each time it is offered.

We at Jain Digest, decided to explore the details of the Maun Sadhana Shibir so that we all can learn about the transformative experience of others. I contacted a few attendees and talked with them about the content and its application in our daily routine. Here is brief description of my telephone talk with several participants.

The five day Maun Sadhana Shibir contained daily live discourse by Acharya Yashovijayji, followed by a 30-minute meditation. Every participant was required to maintain noble silence of mind, speech and body during entire five day shibir. The discourse was focused on innate nature of consciousness and the defilement of its attention arising out of focus on material objects of the mundane world. The attention needs to be refocused from external objects to internal innate nature of consciousness. The attention needs to go deeper within to experience the blissful joy.



Puja Acharyashri advised the attendees to just witness any thoughts that may arise from subconscious mind during the 30 minute meditation practice. If any random thought surfaces, just witness and do not indulge into that thought stream. The thought will simply subside and disappear without any support from the mind. **He emphasized that the most important prerequisites for tangible result are: an intense desire to know our innate nature of true self and commitment that at any cost I want to be self-realized in this life span.** Puja Acharyashri cited the following example to illustrate the need to transform the faith and commitment from external world to inner consciousness. "As soon as the young woman is engaged to get married, her attention shifts 180 degree from parent's home and relatives; to fiancé and his family. Similarly our intense desire to know true nature of self should help shift our attention from mundane world to inner consciousness."

The 30-minute meditation was divided into four discrete steps.

1. Bhav Pranayama (watching deep breathing) for 10 minutes. When we exhale we must think of exhaling anger and other passions. When we inhale we must think of inhaling the positive vibration existing in entire cosmos. Our commitment to this process and faith plays big role. The more we feel happy and joyous, the more we will attract the positive vibration. If we are unhappy and entertaining negative thoughts in our mind then we will attract the negative energy from the cosmos. This step will loosen up our attention from external objects and set the stage to focus our attention on mantra and then to inner consciousness.
2. Loud chanting of mantra for 2 minutes.
3. Chanting of same mantra silently without murmuring for eight minutes and
4. Stop using mantra as means and let inward focused attention be with your consciousness for at least 10 minutes. Remain in that noble silence mode for as long as you can.

What was the experience of the attendees during this meditation?

One participant (who wanted to stay anonymous) elaborated on the actual happening during those four discrete steps. "The loud chanting created vibrations which acted as deterrent to mundane thoughts. The chanting in mind without murmuring took the attention deeper within."

"Got some control on thoughts taking place in various circumstances" said Rupaben Mehta who has attended two five day maun shibirs. She developed some awareness of thoughts in various situations. In her case, the impact of negative or reactive thoughts went down with more and more awareness. She was able to examine the root cause of reactive

Dr. Rashmibhai Purohit expressed similar views and added that “Investigative thought about “Who Am I?” reduced thoughts related with body, family or society”. He said “Just like the content of any movie cannot be changed, similarly the drama of our life is pre-destined and cannot be changed.” Acharyashri says ‘The best course of action is to accept it as it is unfolding. Whatever happens cannot go beyond body and mind. All activities related with body, family and society must be considered as duty to play it out the pre-destined life drama and you as a soul must remain witness to all happening. He feels that the application of discretionary knowledge is a vast, life-long undertaking. Implementation requires constant awareness of internal thoughts undergoing during all activities.

“In the beginning, the peaceful silence will be from the absence or reduction of thoughts”, said Neenaben, an active participant in shibir. “In the beginning, it is not a blissful joy from deeper within. However, with more and more practice, we will realize the inner peace arising from deeper within. **Following the third step with full concentration is a must to get tangible results in the fourth step.** The third step is more like ‘swadhyay’; leading into meditation stage in the fourth step. During third step, we must remain aware of surfacing any unwanted mundane thought. Just be witness and get back to mental chanting process. In that case, the attention remains focused on chanting and it is devoid of any thoughts related with body, family, work or any other mundane association.”

The essence of Maun Sadhana Shibir is to develop awareness to such an extent that while conducting our daily family, office and social duties, we must remain just a knower and witness to all activities. To the extent we react to the external events, our wrong belief - ‘I am the body and mind’ - will be reinforced; which will be hindrance to our spiritual progress and keep us tied to the never ending cycle of birth and death. Attending such Maun Shibir and earnestly following the guidance of the Guru is essential to keep marching ahead towards liberation.

The next opportunity to attend the Maun Sadhana Shibir is from April 5 to 12, 2020 at Saputara in Gujarat state. Please note that this shibir is for newcomers only. People in the age group 16 to 60 are welcome to attend. Special preference will be given to professionals and post graduates.

To register for the shibir go to: www.antaryatra.in

Words of Wisdom by Shri Yashovijay Suriji Maharaj Saheb (Source: Jain Digest May 2011)

*Pujya Yashovijay Suriji Maharaj Saheb took Diksha at the tender age of 11 under his Guru Ohmkar Suriji. He learned the basic principles of Jainism from his Guru but still struggled to find his real self. The Guru said “I can guide; but only **self** can realize the true nature of **self**”. Hence at the age of 13, Acharyashriji embraced maun and stayed in that state for over 30 years.*

About the importance of Maun, Acharyaji said, “Knowledge remains superficial unless one absorbs its deeper meaning through introspection. Our likes and dislikes keep us in the external world. These likes and dislikes evaporate once we realize that all these are a result of our own fault or our delusion. Words are only required to stay in the outer world; no words are required to stay close to the soul. Unless one stays within, one cannot understand the reality of the self.” Acharyaji had stayed in maun until he was able to realize his self – Who I am? - That nameless self. Why did he come out of maun?

“Only after one realizes the power of ego-less self, one can give the message of truth to the outside world. My Parmatama’s message was to first realize the power of the ego-less self. With that realization came a unique joy (anand). The second part of the message was to guide others to realize the same anand. A book of knowledge only provides the outline, but the joy of one’s soul can inspire another soul to the same joyful state”, said Acharyaji.



Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of executive board and a past Pathshala teacher at Jain Center of Southern California. His current activities are: conducting swadhyay on various Jain scriptures, reading and contemplating on spiritual scriptures, listening to the spiritual discourses and visiting several religious ashrams in India for 3 to 4 months every year. E-mail: ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

Reaching the Fountain of Joy within You

By Dilip Parekh

(This article/story is written based on similar stories heard during pravachans by various dignitaries. An earlier version of this article was published in the JCSC Connect magazine in October 2014.)

Once upon a time in a small village there lived a saint. He was very pious and spent most of his time in meditation. Once a week he would give a sermon under a big tree on the outskirts of the village and teach the villagers about religion and spirituality. Most of the people in the village were farmers and lived contentedly and happily. They respected the saint and asked for his advice on many occasions. They tried to put into practice what the saint taught them.



One year there was a severe drought and the farmers started losing their crops. The rainy season had come and gone without much rain and there was no sign of any rainfall in the near future. The nearby rivers and lakes had dried out. Water tankers from nearby towns were brought in to provide drinking water to the villagers. But how long can they survive like that?

Not knowing what they can do, the villagers decided to approach the saint and asked for help. After listening to their plea, the saint went into a trance. People were anxiously waiting for an answer. After a few minutes the saint opened his eyes and told them they could find water in a spot at the bottom of a trash dump outside the village.

He said, "You will have to dig out the trash and burn it. Keep digging until you reach a big white rock. When you break open that rock, fresh water will gush out." The villagers were excited to hear this. They thanked the saint and rushed towards the trash dump with their shovels, rock picks and any other tools they could find.

The trash dump was 15 feet deep and a lot of trash from the neighboring villages had been dumped there for several years. It smelled awful and no one liked to even go near the dump. But now the villagers were desperate. They put on their masks and started taking the trash out. It contained rotten food, papers, broken bottles, plastics and a lot of decomposing household items. A team of people started burning the trash. With the burning trash, the air was foul and suffocating. Some of the villagers could not tolerate the filthy atmosphere, got sick and left. Others continued to dig and burn. They firmly believed in the saint and focused on the water they were eventually going to find. They actually started rejoicing as more and more of the trash was being burnt to ashes and the trash dump was getting cleaner.

Eventually after few days, they reached a big white rock at the bottom of the pit. With a lot of anticipation all the villagers watched as couple of them banged on the rock with their rock picks. A few strokes and a huge fountain of water emerged and drenched them all. The villagers hugged each other and rejoiced. They ran to the saint to tell him the good news and thanked him. The saint congratulated them for their hard work and asked them all to meet him under the oak tree the next day evening.

As the sun was setting the next day, the villagers gathered under the tree and awaited the saint's arrival. They were all happily sharing their excitement about the water and dreaming about the future. The saint arrived and everyone applauded.

The saint began to speak: "I congratulate you on your tenacity and hard work. I thank you for your faith in me. You have done whatever was necessary for you to clean the filthy trash dump to get to the clean water. What have you learned from this experience?"

One villager said, "Have faith"

Another said, "Work together for a good cause"

"Have patience", "Focus of a goal", "Recycle!", etc. etc.

The saint said, "Very good. These lessons certainly will help you. However, there is bigger lesson in this; a lesson that will help you to advance in your spiritual journey. Can someone tell me what that is?"

The villagers all looked at each other. For a while they whispered among themselves; but no one could come up with the answer. After a couple minutes they all became quiet and kept looking at the saint in anticipation.

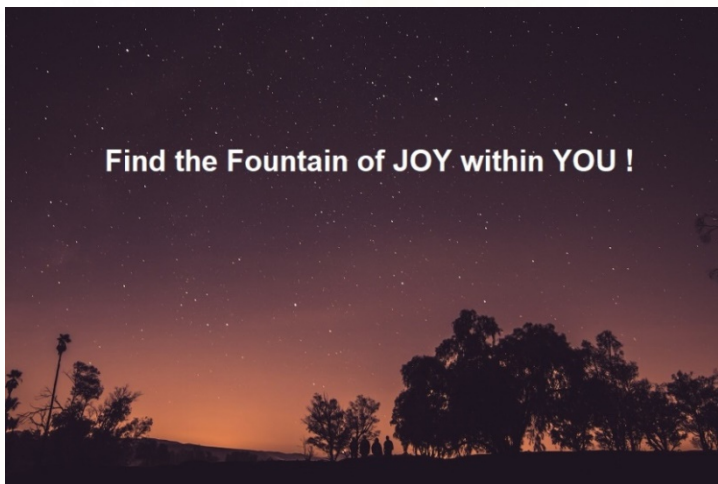
The saint asked, "Do you want me to tell you the answer?"

"Yes!" said everyone.

"What you have done to clean the trash dump, you must do the same internally. If you look carefully, you will find that our minds and hearts are also all filled with trash – the trash of passions such as anger, ego, deceit, greed, aversions and attachments. This 'trash' is making our life miserable. It is keeping us away from experiencing our own divinity."

"But remember, at the bottom of all this, there is your True Self, a pure Soul, that is peaceful, powerful and a fountain of joy. Don't look outside for happiness and peace. Go within. Take out that trash of anger, ego, deceit and greed. You will need to start 'digging' – introspecting – to get the trash out. It will smell awful. As you start introspecting, you will be surprised and sometimes ashamed to know that you have so many faults and that there is so much filth in you."

"But as you start taking action to cleanse yourself with faith and devotion in the Lord, start paying attention to your own attitudes and wrong beliefs, start changing your attitude and behavior, you will start burning that filth. Believe in Lord's teachings; believe in your True Self. And with determination, continue to introspect, reduce your passions and remove your faults. And with Lord's grace, one day you will experience the everlasting peace and bliss that is within you."



(Image by Free-Photos from Pixabay)

As the saint completed his sermon, everyone could feel the love and compassion in his advice. There was a long round of applause. Everyone was quiet. They bowed down to the saint.

The Sun had set and the stars were appearing in the dark sky above. As they returned home, their minds were full of resolve to find the fountain of joy within themselves, and their hearts were full of renewed hope for their spiritual well-being.



Dilip Parekh is the editor of Jain Digest. He is a member of Jain Center of Southern California and has been teaching pathshala students since 2001.
Email: dilipparekh@gmail.com

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

Section: Young Generation

Section Editor: Sanjay Bhandari

Activities of JOY by the Youth at Jain Society of Greater Detroit

By Bhaani Jain

The word "Joy" doesn't only mean something that gives us happiness and pleasure; it also means **Jain Organization of Youth - JOY** at the Jain Society of Greater Detroit.

This year I am extremely grateful to be a part of the 2019-2020 JOY Board, as a Treasurer.

This job has some challenges to start with budget planning for all the planned events for the year, collecting dues and most importantly looking for sponsors. However on the plus side, being a part of all these activities, it's helping me a lot in learning how to interact with people and also money management.



Last year's first event for the new JOY team was **Teachers Appreciation Day** held on Oct 6, 2019. To celebrate this event, the JOY members planned to give the Paathshaala Teachers a break and the classes were tutored by JOY members. Joy members also prepared hand written notes and cards for each teacher thanking them for their dedication and services. After the classes were over, during the assembly Joy Board presented a video (which was a summation of all the videos recorded earlier) to show how thankful the kids were towards their teachers. Finally, a nice special lunch was served for the teachers by students as a treat.

The second event was sale of **Diwali cards**. To bring awareness among young kids, elementary age study class were encouraged to make handmade Diwali cards, which were auctioned off by JOY members to raise funds.



The third and one of the major JOY events is Thanksgiving Day **Navkaar Jaap**. Every year JOY organizes Navkaar Jaap to pray for the souls of slain turkeys on Thanksgiving Day. In the morning, senior Joy members cooked Indian/continental breakfast for the society members, while younger members dressed in black and white, took orders and served the food in a restaurant style. After the breakfast, all the members performed the Navkaar Jaap. The event was started by the youngest members of the society, followed by young singers and also senior members. It was amazing to see the dedication and involvement of the society.

The fourth event was the **drive for collection of new/Gently used Books, Toys & Clothes**. Every year JOY members plan this "Spreading the JOY" event during the holidays, not only because it is cold outside but it's also the season for giving. A huge amount of collected items were donated to "Farmington Area (Michigan) Good fellows".

The next event was our annual "**JOY LOCK IN**". During this event, all the kids who can participate gather at a host family home, and spend the night there having fun filled activities. This year a total of 31 kids attended. There was a wonderful Dinner prepared by the Host family with help from Joy Advisors and JOY Board members.

The whole night was divided into 3 major parts 1)- Jain Discussion and Debates 2) Games & Fun Activities for all age groups and 3) Blanket making.



All the Kids Collectively helped in making **Blankets for Bhavna -YJA drive** for the homeless people. It was amazing to see how everyone was so involved in making the blanket. Later in the morning we were provided with an American breakfast prepared in the amazing Jain way.

The New Year has come with a brand-new JOY event – This year JOY has taken up another challenge on Jan 26th. About 25- 30 JOY members along with advisors and board members will be spending the whole day with **kids from Abhi Shah Foundation**. Currently there are around 45 Kids who are being helped by the foundation. JOY will provide lunch for the kids there and have lunch with them, create Valentine cards, play games, talk to them and make them feel we are friends. If weather permits, then we might even have a Basketball game with them.

Next event is **JOY winter camp**, which is one of the star attraction and we all wait for it for the whole year. For this event a huge multifamily vacation house is rented within couple of hours of drive, and JOY members and advisors go there for 3 fun filled / no homework days. This event is primarily focused on helping kids getting to know each other. During those days JOY kids with the guidance of JOY advisors, do all the work, including preparing all the meals, serving the food, cleaning of the house and managing fun activities.

Next event, in March we have “**Senior Appreciation Day**”. During this event JOY members invite all the senior members of the society and arrange a fun filled afternoon with various games and activities, followed by light dinner. JSGD study class kids will participate in the interfaith event (World Sabbath day) on March 1, 2020.

This year JOY will also play a very important role with the volunteer activities for one of the most important event. It is **Jain Society of Greater Detroit Fund Raising Event** on Saturday, March 28th, 2020. JOY members will also perform the dances in this event.

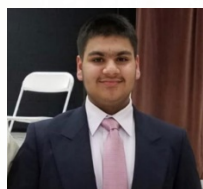
May is the time when we celebrate **Mother's Day** by arranging a Garba in the temple. JOY will also be involved with the **Father's Day** picnic in June.

In conclusion, the collective goal of all these events and activities of JOY has been to promote the values of Jainism in the kids, while helping them overcome the obstacles they face in their student life.

To learn more about JOY, go to:

JOY Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/jsgdjoy/>

JOY Leader's Interviews: <https://youtu.be/Mdbyu8KKZ5c>



Bhaani Jain is a junior at Farmington High School, Michigan. His hobbies include soccer and swimming and is very interested in mechanical DIY like building and creating small things out of household appliances. Bhaani is also a Treasurer in Jain Organization of Youth (JOY) at the Jain Society of Greater Detroit.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>

The Elephant in the Room: Debunking Youth Involvement in the Western Jain Community

By Arpit Mehta

(This article was originally published in September 2019 issue of YJPerspectives)

There is a Jain elephant in the room, and I can't ignore it any longer.

Setting up the scene:

"We do this because it's mentioned in the aagams; it has been done for ages."

"You guys just come to the derasar around lunch time."

"Oh! I saw the YJP newsletter; it seems all your photos are from dinner events. It seems like everything we donate goes to your parties!"

"We don't offer student memberships at the temple; it's X dollars to be a member. If you aren't a member, you can't vote on temple decisions."

"No, we don't allow fundraising or any other event promotion if it's not related to the Jain temple or Jainism."

These are actual comments I have received from senior members at Jain centers in the US. We've all seen the same classic scene: some uncle stands up and receives a standing ovation for speaking about how today's youth will lead the next generation of Jains and how it is so critical to involve them in our temple activities and Jain community. But they only want the youth to participate in the way they *want* the youth to. Today's youth is fully capable of understanding the dynamics and mindset of the members of their local Jain center, including more senior members. They have already started to take major life decisions, and they want to have a say in key temple decisions and activities as well.

The Problem:

I investigated further. I asked young Jains why they do not want to go to the temple.

"I have a lot of questions about not eating at night, root vegetable, unfertilized eggs; the answer is, it's part of our practice and rituals with no logical explanation."

"Oh it's all gossip and politics. We go there and we feel like people just want to get a hold of our biodatas for marriage."

"We don't want to be associated with religion. What we do want is to be good human beings. Why go to the temple and get judged because of the parties I go to, the places I check into, or what I choose to eat and drink?"

The youth of today is not like the youth of yesterday. Today's youth lives in the information age, with access to knowledge from all corners of the globe, largely facilitated by social media. A 10 year old has access to more information than a 50 year old has had in his or her entire lifetime. This has created a generation that truly seeks to know and understand, with an underlying desire to believe on a legitimate basis. They question everything. Therefore, today's older generation cannot expect the youth to do as they say without reasoning, holding that their parents forced them to simply copy them (and when asked "why," was told "just because"). Today's youth wants a community and a supporting Jain center that not only hears their point of view but also welcomes it. They are seeds that need nurturing and direction. Instead, they can be judged as being free loaders who are only out to benefit without contributing.

Life as a student or recent graduate is not simple. Today's youth carry the burden of loans like never before; are busy with internships, on campus jobs, and higher education; and are subject to constant demands given today's highly connected world.

Why go to the temple at all?

"God is everywhere and Jainism is in my heart. I don't need to spend time at the dherasar," says a sophomore from Boston.

"Man, the temple is too far from me and I don't have car," says another graduate student from Miami.

"I wanted to fundraise for a vegan event at my school, but the temple wouldn't allow it," says a high schooler.

These are all real issues for which we have seen minimal discussion, effort or investment to help address from Jain centers. Raising funds for ghee boli, easy! For Mahavir Jayanti event, very easy! For building a new Jain temple, not difficult! Having a bus which brings Jain youth within a 50 miles radius to temple once a month? *Impossible!*

It's not all grim; there is a silver lining within the dark clouds. A Jain center in Texas is making great effort to bring youth to the temple — and no, they didn't do Snatra Puja, instead they hosted a resume building workshop (a brilliant idea!). Yes,

the youth needs professional advice, access to the right network and paths to career growth. A big question on our minds is not if we have enough punya, but if have a job to pay the loans! Other Jain centers have had similar successes with driving youth engagement through other approaches.

It may seem like I am digressing, but the point I would like to make is that the youth look to its community for support with all aspects of the big transition to adulthood. Take for example the Jewish community: small, tight-knit, yet supportive of a wide range of diverse initiatives to support the transition. Of course they teach Judaism, sandwiched between other initiatives including professional networking, job placement, and overall personal growth.

Jains are no less when it comes to resources: will we remain hyper-focused on case examples where the youth does not follow Jainism to a "T" or does not come to the temple regularly — OR — will we do something about their relationship with the community and their faith? We need a radical change in the way we handle youth matters at Jain centers in the US. Invest today and profit tomorrow. Below are some recommendations:

Connection & Conversation: When you see a young Jain at the temple, ask them what they would like to see and do at the temple. Collect their e-mail address and phone number; this is more precious than that of the highest donor in the local community (all praises for those who support the Jain centers). Ask them what they need professionally, personally or spiritually, and please don't judge them. Ask them about their personal and professional plans and help where you can.

Youth-Driven Activities: Setup a youth support fund at every Jain center. Run a ghee boli for this, and earmark this as top priority after temple maintenance. Empower the youth to use this fund to run activities for themselves (with oversight of course, to ensure the funding is appropriately used in line with core Jain principles), and see what they do with it. Let them go to homeless shelters, animal rescue centers, vegan food festivals or whatever pleases them and helps them further their engagement with Jain principles, the Jain way of life, and the Jain community. It is a simple idea, but I can guarantee this will lead to a steady increase in the number of young Jains at the temple.

Expanded Programming: We all know the likes of the dherasar schedule on a typical Sunday: 9AM Digambar puja, 10AM Shwetamber puja, 11AM discourse followed by lunch, with Patshala in parallel. What activity attracts a young college student? Lunch, obviously. Well, why not add a lunch seminar about how to build a LinkedIn profile? Why not run a networking session where all adults come and talk about their profession and how they can assist youth with landing internships and first-time jobs during this time? Infuse Jainism within, and see the youth come flocking to your doors to benefit from what the center can offer.

Engagement: Jain center should reach out to the local universities; they are very welcoming when it comes to the idea of potential donors engaging with them. Reach out to the Indian student organizations, and identify young Jains who may want to come to temple but lack transportation. Rent a van and pick them up. I'll quote an interesting event in my life as a young Jain. I was a student in Philadelphia and one uncle selflessly drove an extra 40 miles each way to and from the local Jain center to bring students from 4 different universities to temple weekly. This was so comforting and humbling to me; it changed my mindset about Jain centers and this community. I felt empowered and had sense of pride in my religion. Since then, I have moved to a different city for work, yet something has changed for me. I have been motivated to join both YJA and YJP as a board member so I may contribute back to this community myself. I still make sure I go to the temple as much as I can. I believe that simple act of kindness from that one uncle drove me to Jainism more than anything else.

Alumni Networking & Connections: Keep a tab on youth coming in and out of the temple. When the youth move onto different cities for schooling or work, contact the local Jain center there. Do this as a courtesy call to give them access to the local Jain network. A Jain center in Florida recently received a call from an aunty in Canada whose son was moving to Florida for work. Locals helped him with finding a vegetarian roommate and connect him to young Jains in the area. This boy is now very well connected to the Jain center in Florida and visits regularly.

These are some ideas which I believe won't require a lot of effort, outside of resources. We need to take this seriously. Talk about it now or else we are at risk of losing a whole generation of young Jains.

There is a Jain elephant in the room, & we need to do something about it.



Arpit Mehta is a Bioinformatics Research Scientist at Miami Cancer Institute, who works with machine learning and artificial intelligence to build models to detect cancer and discover bio-markers for drug design. His passions include desert dirt biking, gardening, and mentorship. Arpit is the Southeast Regional Coordinator for YJP as well as a former YJA Board Member.

Section: Conversations

Section Editor: Dilip Parekh

Q4-2019 YJP Professional Spotlight Award: Ajaita Shah

Moderated by Priyanka Shah

(This article was originally published in December 2019 issue of YJPerspectives)



Ajaita Shah is the founder and CEO of Frontier Markets. Founded in 2011, Frontier Markets is a rural marketing, sales, and service distribution company focused on providing access to affordable and quality consumer durables to low-income households in emerging markets. In line with its mission to create “Saral Jeevan” or an “Easy Life” for rural customers, Frontier Markets has delivered a range of high social impact products including clean energy, agriculture, health, and water sanitation to 4.9M people and over 700,000 rural households in India. This has been facilitated through a unique distribution model where a network of over 3,500 digitized rural entrepreneurs help educate, relate, and reach these households. Prior to Frontier Markets, Ajaita worked in microfinance with Indian-based organizations including SKS Microfinance and Ujjivan Financial Services. She has worked on numerous development projects in 7 states in India and consulted under the World Bank on microfinance strategies for South Asia and Latin America. She is a Clinton Service Corp, Echoing Green, and Cordes Fellow and has been awarded many accolades including the Most Influential Leader in Microfinance Under 30, Business Week’s 30 Under 30 award, Forbes Top 30 Under 30 Social Entrepreneurs award, and the United Nations Women Transforming India award. Ajaita has a BA in International Relations from Tufts University.

Hi, Ajaita! On behalf of Young Jain Professionals (YJP), I would like to congratulate you for your selection as the Q4–2019 YJP Professional Spotlight Award Winner! To start out, please tell us a little about yourself and your upbringing.

My parents are originally from Jaipur, and I grew up in the Jaipur Jain jeweler community in New York. This is a very traditional and conservative community, where preserving our cultural and religious values has always been very important. I learned how to read, write, and speak in Hindi, dance kathak, and make chai. I had access to educational experiences in the US that my parents did not have back in India, and I believe this gave me the exposure that drove me to deeply consider what it truly means to be a global citizen.

You are now on a unique and purpose driven career path. Can you tell us more about the formal education and experiences that have led you to this path?

I was on the debate team in high school where I participated in policy debates on a national level. This was a great atmosphere to form and ask critical questions about the world and our role within it. It was an open atmosphere to explore the challenges out there – issues such as world hunger and poverty.

What always stood out to me was that I come from a place of privilege and opportunity yet the world around me is clearly unequal. This is an interesting notion given today's commonly held ethos that everyone and every soul is equal and should have access to the same opportunities everywhere. As a Jain, we fundamentally believe in karma; I often questioned how if we come from a place of privilege, how can we help the world get to a more equal platform? These concepts have always resonated with me.

From here, I went on to study international relations at Tufts University. During my studies, I had the opportunity to work in mediation and conflict resolution. Through this work, I met people coming from a place of conflict for the first time. These were people exposed to genocide in Rwanda and people coming out of the aftermath of fights across Pakistan, India, and Kashmir. Hearing their personal stories, including their stories of resilience, influenced me in a very big way. I realized the reason we see terrorism and jihad in this world may not stem from hatred but rather from people being denied access to equal opportunities. I realized that the world cannot be a better place if we do not fight for better opportunities to create economic equality. Reflecting on this, I took a break to think through my personal mission and place in this world: Where will I make this type of change? How will I make it? And what will be my role in all this?

Taking a break is often easier said than done, even if it is the right and best course of action at the time. How did you and those around you approach the decision to take a full-stop break?

As any typical Indian parent would react, my parents encouraged me to go to grad school and move into a stable career. I told myself that I would take a year off and then go back to law school. During this time, I served as a Clinton Service Corp fellow and then went on to gain experience at India-based organizations doing work in microfinance. This was a very new concept at the time; Muhammad Yunus would not have won a Nobel Peace Prize had this not been significant! As part of the microfinance movement, we studied the opportunity that comes with investing in women in India from a true business lens for the first time. The idea that investing in women in poverty can lead to economic gain, backed by a solid thesis, was gaining traction. Through this work, I met so many powerful women. Though they were uneducated and lacked access to basic necessities such as water and electricity, they were real, humble, and hospitable. It was exciting to be part of a new industry bringing big investors such as JP Morgan and Citi into the picture. The World Bank and United Nations also took interest, looking for 20-something year-olds looking to make a footprint for themselves.

What motivated you to move into social entrepreneurship?

When you put your skills in a place of impact, your impact can be exponential. Through my experiences, I found my calling. I wanted to take my work in microfinance to the next level. After living across many rural villages in India, I wanted to play a role in better delivering services to the poor. I wanted to invest and attract investment into the economic development of the poor.



Frontier Markets placing women at the center of the value chain, empowering rural women for income generation

A) Driving access to affordable mobile phones

B) Demonstrating the Solar Rakshak Plus, the first Indian-made solar powered torch designed to meet the World Bank's global lighting quality standards

C) Demonstrating solar lighting portfolio products in a "dark room setting" to create awareness around clean and reliable energy offerings

In 2011, I started my business, Frontier Markets, with 3 goals in mind. First, I setup Frontier Markets as a for-profit company with the intention of growing it to be the market leader in delivering services to rural houses at scale. This involves providing access to everything a rural household would need to have a better life: clean energy, water, internet, and cell phones. Second, I wanted Frontier Markets to both serve as well as create opportunities for the poor. If my fundamental driving factor is to create a footprint in my impact, creating opportunities for the poor is just as important as the products I can serve them through my company. With this in mind, Frontier Markets hired locally, trained locally, and invested locally. We have built a network of 5,000 digital rural entrepreneurs who sell our products to rural households. Third, I wanted Frontier Markets to operate through a gender lens. As an Indian woman, we are often pushed into a stereotype of limitations. Rural women in India can be drivers of change and drive significant economic gain; when a rural woman has money, she tends to invest into her children's futures and her village differently from men.

Keeping these 3 principles in mind, Frontier Markets is now an established rural sales and marketing access company. We create impact and social value in a commercially viable way. ***What drives me everyday is that we have touched nearly 5 million people and 700,000 households.*** At this stage, we are looking to further accelerate our scale and impact. We want to evolve into a model that may be replicated in other parts of the world such as Africa.

Have your Jain and personal values influenced your professional decisions and actions? If so, how?

I have always applied the values of purpose, humanity, and empathy in every decision I have ever made. There was a point in my company's journey where we had to choose between making money and helping a community. We were working with farmers who were literally blocked from moving money by the Indian government. The Indian government was getting rid of cash, where many rural areas only function on cash. We had the choice to serve them the product they needed, yet were also faced with the risk of \$400,000 in debt landing on our balance sheet should they not be able to pay us back. Do we save our money or serve our people? My Board held firm on the idea that money will come and go, yet serving our people is paramount, where Frontier Markets is fundamentally committed to service. We are often faced with such real scenarios and decisions that force us to balance our values, and applying these 3 principles is how I approach these.

Ajaita, you have had an incredible journey so far. In retrospect, is there anything you would have done differently?

I've thought about other paths. I could have been a banker. There were times I would be meeting investors in Silicon Valley who would ask me how much I make. I'd say, "I'm a social entrepreneur. I make like \$10,000." They would respond, "What if I gave you \$300,000 to manage my fund?" I had no idea I would go "all in" and do this. I really thought I'd take a year off, go to India to do some service work, come back to get a law degree, and eventually land a job at a law firm. This is the path I was expected to take, and I both surprised and scared myself. Sometimes, things just happen and you just go with the flow. This has been a very, very difficult journey. When you start a company and it doesn't work out; you are forgiven, and the world is still okay. When you setup a company that is responsible for real people who are in a vulnerable place, you and your business are depended upon in a very different way where "hiccups" have real ramifications. There is no excuse to fail given the exponential negative outcomes that come with failure. This is where my passion comes from, and this is also where my fear comes from.



On this path, you must be committed. You separate yourself from your purpose and your position in community. If my purpose is to drive impact, then there are times I need to be away from my family and in India, focused on my work. I have made sacrifices in terms of my own life and sanity. Finding a balance is something that I am not very good at and that I have struggled with. Yet, when you see what you have created, you kind of self-justify what you have done. If we start understanding that the achievements we have gained are not for ourselves but for others and what we are able to give others, this can help us exponentially make the world a better place.

Conversation with Tapasvi Meenaxi Shah

Moderated by Raj Kumar Jain



It is my honor to present Tapasvi Shri Meenaxiji Shah from New York who has done 32 days upavas in 2019. I have done 10 days upvas several times in the past, but I am in owe that Meenaxiji, a Sadhak just like us, has done such a long tapasya. Khoob Khoob Anumodna and best wishes to Meenaxi'ji, her husband Heemansuji and the entire New York Jain temple Samaj. I hope this story will inspire you and help you in your own sadhana. Please join me in congratulating her.

Das Lakshan Parva comes 3 times a year. (First one is in Jan/Feb, second in Mar/Apr and third in Aug/Sept). Meenaxiji has been observing it for the last 11 years, 3 times a year by observing upvas on 1st and last day of vrat and Ekasana during rest of the days. Additionally, she has been sacrificing one materialistic thing dear to her during each observance.

Meenaxi Shah, her husband Heemansuji and son Vinit live in Elmhurst, New York. They have been in the US for the past 15 years. Meenaxiji is a lab technician by profession, currently staying as a home maker.

Meenaxiji, when and how did you decide to do this vrat for 32 days which I consider to be one of the most difficult and inspiring?

In January of 2019 I decided to do the vrat of 32 Upvas during the Das Laxana Parva in September 2019. I also decided to do it with observing complete maun or silence. I started by watching YouTube videos of Maharajji's on optimizing usage of our inner energy for lifting our spiritual levels which guided and inspired me to observe the fast with maun. My family and friends believed in me. It proved to be the most difficult thing for me.

What inspired you to do it?

Shri Solekaran Vrat is one of the most significant Vrat of Digamber Tradition, it is said by Acharyas that it could result in bonding of Tirthankar Naam karma as well as testing your inner strength and will. I felt strongly that at least once during the 16 year, I should observe the Vrat with complete fasting. I have been contemplated doing it each of the last two years. I didn't only want to do it to shed my karma's, but I also wanted to inspire the youth whose faith in Jain way of life may have wavered a bit. I wanted them to see the energy in Jain way of life and scriptures. Towards this, I was constantly seeking the blessings of Acharyas and Muni Maharaj whenever I visited India.

Did you face any issues or problems during this long period of extreme fast for 32 days?

No, not really. The first 9 days I did the complete upavas without even the water; then I took water one time in the day. I would go to the temple basically for the whole day and do swadhyay the entire time. This enabled me to concentrate on my inner self and it kept me focused. The most difficult thing for me was the maun or silence for such a long time. During the Vrat, I used to spend most of my day - from 8 am till 5 pm - at the Shri Adianth Jinalya, Jain Center of America by doing Pooja, attending Bhagwan's Abhishek, doing Swadhyay, Dhyana and Samayiks. Shri Adianth Jinalya at Jain Center of America, New York provided perfect atmosphere and support for me, which was definitely needed for such a level of Tap. I would like to express my great gratitude towards the entire sangh for their support and encouragement during and after those 32 days. Once Shri Das Lakshan Maha Vrat started, I also received the blessings and guidance of the visiting scholar Dr. Abhaykumarji Dagadeji also, which helped me immensely, especially as Vrat neared completion.

Any final thoughts, Meenaxiji?

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the volunteers, employees, committee members, and Board of Trustees of Jain Center of America, New York who always stood by my side during and on completion of my Vrat. In fact they were always there for me, and a special thanks to my family without whose support this would not have been possible. I would like to thank Jain Digest for giving me the opportunity to share my experience.

I would like to thank you, Meenaxiji, for sharing this wonderful journey with us which I am sure will inspire everyone specially our younger generation as it has certainly inspired me. My hats off to you for such a great achievement and a wonderful experience. We all feel very proud of you. Jai Jinendra.



Raj Kumar Jain is Section Editor of Education section of Jain Digest. He is a Businessman in the US for 40 years with wife Neerja and family. Rajji is a IJS Trustee, JAINA – Director, Co-Chair, Population Survey Committee, serving on Constitution Committee and Membership Committee (New Centers joining JAINA) email: RajQmar@yahoo.com

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-Feb2020>



$$\sqrt{a^2 + \epsilon} = a + \frac{\epsilon}{2a}$$

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

$$\sqrt{a} \times \sqrt{a} = (\sqrt{a})^2$$

$${}^nC_r = \frac{n!}{r!(n-r)!}$$

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON JAINISM AND MATHEMATICS

$${}^nP_n = n!$$

$$\log \log m^n = \log n + \log \log m$$

Ancient Wisdom Meets the Modern Age

June 20th and 21st, 2020

$${}^nC_1, {}^nC_2, {}^nC_3, \dots$$

$${}^nP_r = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!}$$

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
32 Vassar Street, Cambridge MA 02139, USA



JAINA
4099 Shady Ridge Circle,
Corona, CA-92881

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Bernardino, CA
Permit #3515