

Jain Digest

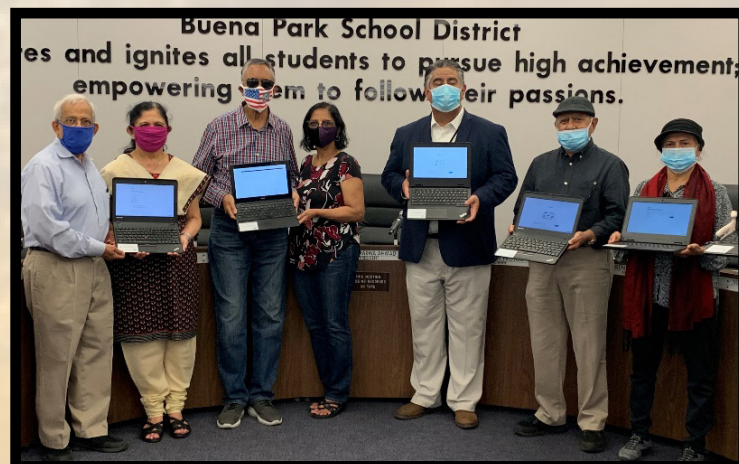
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Volume 14



A Publication by the Federation of Jain Associations in North America



FINDING INSPIRATION DURING THE PANDEMIC



JAINA's Chorme Book Project

"It is during the darkest moments that we must focus on the light" - Aristotle Onassis

JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the

Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)

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Finding Inspiration During the Pandemic

Disclosure

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Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

During the past three months, the reality of the motto of Jainism, “**Parasparopagraho Jīvānām**”, has been witnessed by the whole world. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that all living beings – including animals and plants – depend on each other for their existence. The tragedy – which has affected millions of people around the world irrespective of race, religion, social and political status, culture, skin color, geographical location, language – has humbled us all. We pray for all the departed souls and their families. We sincerely wish a speedy recovery to those who are battling this virus.

History shows us that during every natural and manmade disaster, ordinary people show extraordinary bravery, sacrifice, and compassion. COVID-19 is no exception. In communities across the globe we witness people supporting each other, appreciating the dedication and sacrifices of front-line workers, helping migrant workers with food and other essentials, etc. In such difficult times of uncertainty and fear, people find solace in the guidance of their spiritual and religious leaders. It is amazing to see how leaders of all religions and spiritual traditions around the globe have responded via online meetings, YouTube videos and other social media, offering valuable advice on how to face this unprecedented crisis.

The Editorial Team of Jain Digest brings you a few important articles related to COVID-19. In the *Information* section, we tell you about JAINA's World Community Services Committee, which is actively providing humanitarian support to those affected by COVID-19. Another article in the same section shows how important Jain traditions are relevant to the pandemic. And in the *Inspiration* section, you will find heart-warming stories about people doing their best to help and support each other.

Based on reader feedback, we have added a number of new features to Jain Digest that we are very excited to share with you. We are now using a more advanced “Flip-Book” format which allows you to zoom in on the content using a sliding scale to suit your reading preference. Additionally, all website and YouTube video links are active. Clicking on the website link will take you to the external website and clicking on the video link will play the video in place instantly. You can also download the magazine as a PDF file.

Please note that we are now hosting the magazine on the JAINA website at www.jaina.org/jaindigest where you can find current and all past issues. The July and October 2019 and the February 2020 issues have been converted to the new flip-book format and are available on the website. We hope you will find the new format more appealing and engaging. Please email your feedback to us at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com or fill out a form at <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

I thank all the authors for their dedication, hard work and timely submission of articles. There are many articles in this issue that you will find interesting and elevating. Due to space limitation I am naming only a few:

- In the Compassion section, read about a young Indian entrepreneur, Prashant Gade, who is changing many lives by providing affordable artificial hands to those in need.
- In the Devotion section, learn about the extraordinary life of Pujya Shree Atmanandaji, founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Adhyatmik Sadhana Kendra (Koba Ashram), written by Mahendrabhai Khandhar.
- We thank Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai for providing us with an article titled “Love Divine” which shows how to transform love into devotion.

Hope you enjoy reading all articles in this issue. Stay safe. Stay healthy.

In Seva,

Dilip Parekh

Jai Jinendra!

I pray to Jineshwar Bhagwan for everyone's health and hope you all are giving the utmost priority to the safety of yourself, family, and the community during this Coronavirus Pandemic. Let us help our Doctors, Nurses, Laborers, and everyone who is working around the clock for our safety and basic needs.

I hope everyone had a spiritually uplifting Navpad Oli with their family. JAINA expresses heartfelt Anumodna to all the Tapasvis.

Due to COVID-19, many JAINA events have come to a halt. Yet I am glad to talk about JAINA's accomplishments, various on-going virtual events, and upcoming projects.



New JAINA Logo

In April 2020, JAINA adopted a new colorful logo that focuses on the teaching that all living beings are interdependent for existence. All the future communications from JAINA will carry this new logo.



JAINA's Covid-19 Relief Efforts

Coronavirus Relief Fund

JAINA's World Community Services committee has created a Coronavirus Relief Fund. These funds will be utilized to provide hunger relief, medical aid, supplies of personal protective equipment and educational technology devices to people affected by the pandemic in the USA and India.

JAINA Cultural Show for Humanity

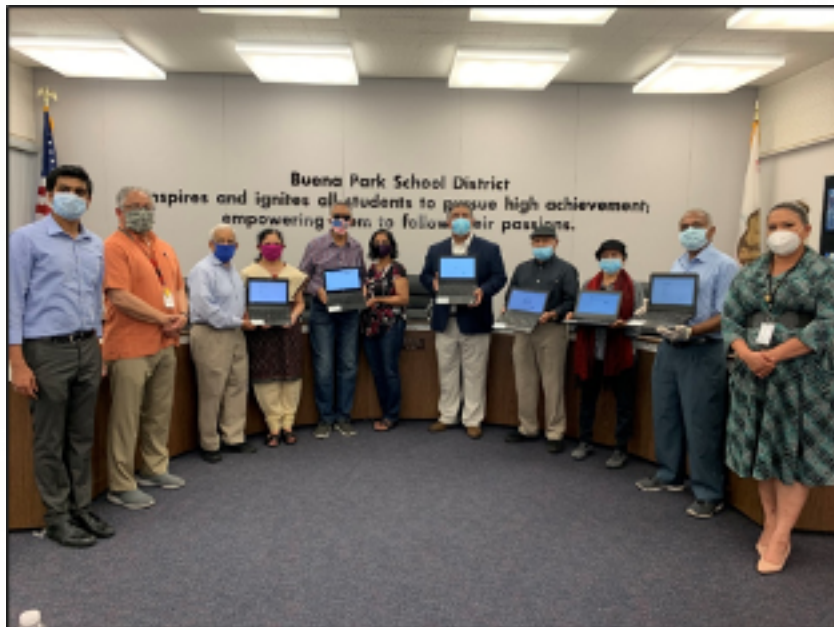
On May 16, 2020, the mesmerizing Cultural Show 'One World One Rhythm' from JAINA Convention 2019 was broadcast on TV Asia. The show was watched by 350,000 viewers and about 1,500 viewers watched it on the JAINA website.



During the event, JAINA raised approximately \$225,000 for humanitarian services in North America and India. JAINA is grateful to each and everyone for their generous donations. The funds will be used to provide hunger relief, medical aid, supplies of personal protective equipment, and educational technology devices to people affected in the USA, Canada, and India from Coronavirus Pandemic.

Chrome Books Project

The Anekant Community Center of Los Angeles and The Sarva Mangal Family trust had a very successful Chromebooks project of providing 500 Chromebooks to the students of 4 neighborhood schools. As the saying goes “reward of good work is more good work”.



JAINA, with the help of the Anekant Community Center and Sarva Mangal Family Trust has decided to take this project on a national level through the member Jain Centers - supporting their respective local communities by donating Chromebooks to the neighborhood schools so that the underprivileged students can attend virtual classes the schools are offering.

JAINA has explained this project to many Jain Center Presidents who have enthusiastically supported this initiative. We already have more than 12 Jain Centers who have committed to participate in this once in a lifetime opportunity and the rest are working with their committees to get an approval.

Here is how the project will work:

- Each Jain Center has to commit to finding a school and/or a school district to give a minimum of 50 Refurbished Chromebooks.
- Each Jain Center has to raise funds for 30 Chromebooks ($\$125 \times 30 = \3750).
- Sarva Manga Family Trust will match 15 Chromebooks and ACC will match 5 Chromebooks.

Anekant Community Center will drop ship all the orders directly to the school or the school district office based on the orders received from the Jain Centers.

Other JAINA Initiatives

JAINA Scholarship Program

JAINA has established a need-based scholarship program to assist and encourage our students in furthering their college education and better connecting with the youth. To apply for the scholarship go to <https://tinyurl.com/JAINAStudentApp> Application deadline is June 18, 2020.

JAINA Virtual Workshops

JAINA Education Committee has been conducting virtual Jain Workshop sessions (in English with some Hindi explanation) every Wednesday. The sessions are repeated on the following Monday. You can listen to the past sessions at: [https://jainelibrary.org/\\$workshop_usa/index.html](https://jainelibrary.org/$workshop_usa/index.html)

JAINA Online University

In May 2020, JAINA announced an Online University initiative that will offer recorded lectures on Jainism. Initially, the team is preparing to offer three courses consisting of 65 lectures.

- 1) Prakrit Language course of 25 lectures
- 2) Jain Philosophy course of 40 lectures
- 3) Tattvārth Sutra course of 30 lectures

The Prakrit Language course is getting ready to start recording soon after the lockdown is lifted in India.

We have 33 donors so far to sponsor one or more lectures and a generous donor has offered to match dollar for dollar up to \$25,000 for any new sponsorship. I humbly request you to consider sponsoring this new educational initiative of JAINA. You can sponsor one or more lectures with a donation of \$800.00 for each lecture. Donors will be recognized on the lecture videos that they sponsor. If you have any questions regarding this program, please send an email to jainauniversity@jaina.org

Recent Jain Center Activities

- JAINA is proud to learn how the Jain Community of North America is coming forward to help in these difficult times. Jain centers are donating groceries, face masks, providing medical, financial, and other services, conducting virtual Puja, Jaaps, Lectures, Educational workshops, etc.
- On February 16, 2020, members of Jain Center of Southern California got together in an event sponsored by Sarva Mangal Family Trust to felicitate Dr. Jagdish Sheth, Padma Bhushan 2020 Awardee. It was a proud moment for the entire Jain community to honor Dr. Jagdish who is the Charles H. Kellstadt Professor of Marketing at Emory University. Over 250 people attended the event.



Cancellations and Postponements

Considering the current situation following events have been cancelled or postponed:

- Shatrunjay 99 Yatra 2020-2021 is cancelled
- JAINA Convention 2021: JAINA and the Convention Planning Committee is considering various options including postponing the convention into 2022 or holding a virtual convention in 2021.
- YJA Convention July 2020 is cancelled. YJA is conducting various virtual events and helping Jain centers for conducting their virtual events.
- YJP is cancelling many in-person events and the new board is conducting all activities online such as webinars on Jainism, virtual workshops on Yoga, Meditation and Dance etc.

Wishing you Peace, Love & Happiness,

Mahesh Wadher

Inali Foundation – Enabling Lives One Hand at a Time

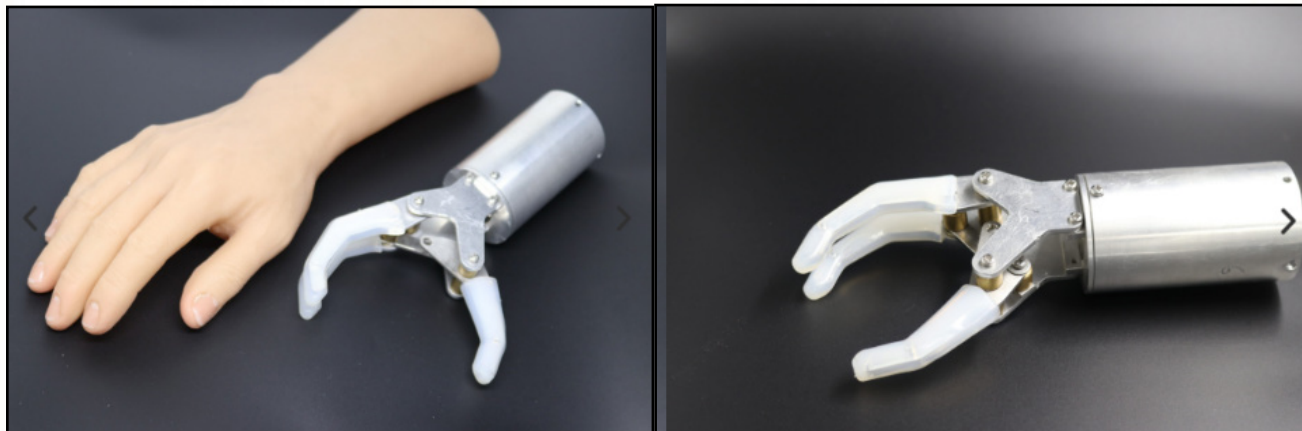
A hand to hold, a hand to bless, a hand to work, a hand to create, a hand to be independent are one of the many things that we can think of when we hear the word hand. However, there is a significant population across the globe, who identify and relate to hands as something that is absent from their body. Even though with scientific and technological advancements, the affordability of healthcare services in developing and underdeveloped nations still remain a great cause of concern. For those who have lost their upper limb, they live with the stigma of being disabled. They struggle to do the smallest of work themselves and are perpetually dependent on others for help and assistance. They no longer remain independent or capable no matter how skilled they are. Of course, there are a few exceptions who have overcome their disability with great determination. Inali foundation was born out of this tremendous need to create and supply affordable upper limbs.



Prashant Gade, a 28 year old engineer from Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh, India, instinctively knew that there was more to life than getting a degree and a job. While working on a robotics project in 2015, Prashant met a 7 year old girl, Shreya, with no arms. With a strong desire to help her live a better life, he did some research and found out that a robotic arm costs \$10,000 dollars which is not affordable to most people. He also discovered that in India alone, each year about 45,000 people lose their arms and more than 85% people are living without a solution. Prashant felt that this was his calling. The purpose of his life was to find an affordable prosthesis for these people.

After working on a few prototypes with passion and ingenuity, Prashant succeeded in building a robotic arm for \$75! With help from a few generous people in US, he acquired ten 3D printers. And that was the beginning of Inali Foundation. The year was 2016. Three years after its formation, the foundation has provided over 1500 upper limbs to people from all over India. Most of the patients of Inali foundation are people who could not afford any kind of prosthetics or any medical assistance related to disability. The two variants of upper limbs that Inali Foundation has distributed are simple silicon made cosmetic gloves and Mayo arm. The entire limb is manufactured and assembled in India.

“After a lot of research and tests, we have been able to create a prosthetic arm which can easily control the user’s fingers by shoulder thrusts and gestures. Unlike most prosthetics which are connected to muscle movements, Inali Arms operate by detecting brain signals. This makes it more accurate as opposed to muscle movements which can easily be misjudged. Even for people with burns or body fat, or even simple sweating, the conventional prosthetic arms can run a risk of malfunction or zero detection of signals,” explains Prashant. (Source: www.thebetterindia.com)





There is nothing better than reaching down and lifting people.

Meet Geeta. After years Geeta was able to drink water using her right hand.

Watch this short video clip: <https://youtu.be/rmcGXkLzj4o>



For more such heart-warming stories, watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N35i1I0CtbE>

Inali Foundation Contact Information: 91 78750 78907, info@inalifoundation.com

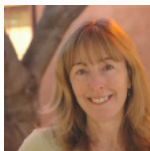
Sources:

- 1) www.inalifoundation.com
- 2) TEDx Talk by Prashant Gade "How technology helped me to change some lives"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xf9N8dgFdwE>
- 3) INKTalks by Prashant gade "Doing More with Less" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGMcBRBpCYc>
- 4) <https://www.thebetterindia.com/180132/madhya-pradesh-dropout-innovation-low-cost-prosthetic-arm-india/>
- 5) Aarohan Platinum Winner: Prashant Gade for Inali Arm <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGMcBRBpCYc>

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

Does Mindfulness Meditation Really Make You Kinder?

By Jill Suttie



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

(This article originally appeared on [Greater Good](#), the online magazine of the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley.)

Mindfulness meditation proponents often tout it as a way to create a more compassionate society. But that claim seems a bit dubious upon first glance.

After all, meditation is an internal affair—focusing on our own experiences, emotions, and thoughts—and people generally meditate alone. What does that have to do with how we treat anyone else? While some meditation practices directly aim for increasing compassion—such as loving-kindness meditation—others focus more on creating mindful attention, a focus on one's present experience. This seems less likely to automatically impact how we relate to others.



Yet evidence is mounting that mindfulness meditation proponents might be right. Though the science is far from conclusive, it points to the likelihood that mindfulness meditation does lead to “prosocial” (kind and caring) feelings and thoughts, and more compassionate behavior towards others. And it may do so by training people in mindful awareness.

“Almost any approach for cultivating care for others needs to start with paying attention,” says Stanford researcher Erika Rosenberg. “The beginning of cultivating compassion and concern, or doing something for the benefit of others, is first noticing what something or someone means to you.”

A gateway to caring behavior

One recent study in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* took a stab at figuring out the relationship between mindfulness meditation and prosocial behavior.

Daniel Berry and his colleagues randomly assigned some participants to either a brief mindfulness training or a training in controlling their attention. The mindfulness training involved focusing on momentary inner experiences: the breath, thoughts, feelings, and body sensations; the attention training involved focusing on important goals in your life.

Then, participants played an online game called Cyberball. “Players” (represented by colored dots) tossed the ball to each other; but after a few tosses, two of the players excluded the third. Though participants were told the dots represented real people located in other rooms, the interactions were actually pre-programmed.

Initially, participants simply observed the game in action. Afterwards, they were asked to write emails to each player in the game, saying “whatever they wanted.” Their responses to the excluded victim were coded by independent raters for warmth, which served as one measure of prosocial behavior. In addition, researchers surveyed how concerned participants were for the victim and how distressed they themselves felt after the game.

Participants then played a second Cyberball game with the players they'd just observed. How often the participant threw the ball to the previously excluded victim was considered a second measure of prosocial behavior.

The findings showed that participants who had trained in mindfulness reported feeling more empathic concern for excluded players—meaning, they felt more tender, sympathetic, and compassionate toward them—but not more distress themselves, compared to simple attention training. They also expressed more warmth in their emails to victims and threw the ball more frequently to them, demonstrating that these feelings were tied to compassionate action. The results also held among a different group of people who didn't receive any training, but reported on surveys that they were more mindful to begin with.



Mindful Breathing

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

Try it Now: <https://tinyurl.com/Mindful-Breathing>

Berry was not surprised by these findings.

“From the philosophical and religious traditions from which mindfulness comes, it’s been long understood that practicing meditation, and cultivating mindfulness, in particular, can conduce to virtuous action,” he says.

So how did mindfulness impact prosocial action? When the mindfulness training induced higher levels of empathic concern in people, they helped the victims more—providing one potential explanation. Increased attention alone, on the other hand, didn’t seem to play a role. This means that mindfulness must be doing more than just increasing how much people notice that someone is suffering, Berry explains; it must be actually increasing their concern.

These findings fit well with Rosenberg’s views. While paying attention is the “gateway” to more caring behavior—allowing you to notice that someone is suffering or that your actions are hurting someone—it’s not enough to elicit action. “You still have to have the motivation to care,” she says.

In additional experiments, Berry and his colleagues ruled out other potential explanations for the positive effects of mindfulness. For example, they compared mindfulness training to a progressive muscle relaxation training, and found the same results favoring mindfulness. They even tried measuring whether mindfulness meditation increased outrage toward the perpetrators in the game, rather than concern for victims. But these factors didn’t change the outcome: People who received mindfulness instruction still felt more empathic concern, and in turn acted more compassionately.

“I think there’s evidence to suggest that the default state of humans is to be focused on the self,” says Berry. “Perhaps what mindfulness does is temporarily break us from that self-focus so that we can be other-oriented.” Indeed, one recent study found that more mindful people are also less concerned with goals that protect their self-image, such as getting recognition from others or avoiding showing any weakness. They care more about compassion-oriented goals—like giving only constructive comments to others or avoiding doing any harm to others.

Mindfulness meditation makes you kind

Of course, Berry’s study was done in a lab with college students, and we don’t know if these findings translate into the real world—or how long the caring feelings and behavior will last after such a short mindfulness practice. But other research seems to point in the same direction.

In her own research, Rosenberg has found that when people practice meditation over a longer period and are then exposed to videos of people suffering, they not only have increased prosocial emotions like compassion, but they have lower “rejection emotions,” like disgust and contempt. This held true even when meditators witnessed someone suffering who was more difficult to find compassion for—like American soldiers bragging about killing Iraqis.

It’s one thing to show compassion for the victims, it’s another level—really getting it—to show compassion for the perpetrators,” she says.

In a 2015 study, students who used a meditation app for three weeks were more likely to offer a chair to a distressed student entering a waiting room on crutches—even when other students didn’t offer help—than a group who had used a brain training app. Berry points to a study that found mindfulness can decrease aggressive behavior, and to another finding that even short trainings in mindfulness can reduce implicit racial and age bias.

In recent review of research in the area, Christina Luberto and her colleagues found that mindfulness training indeed appears to make us kinder toward others. Analyzing only studies that used randomized controlled experiments, they found that meditation training had significant effects on people’s self-reported feelings of compassion and empathy, and also on objective prosocial behaviors—such as increased giving in an economics game or helping another person in distress.

Remaining issues for mindfulness research

One thing everyone seems to agree on: There is still much to be learned about the benefits of meditation, including what is most effective and for whom, especially when it comes to prosocial behavior. And while studies like Rosenberg's and Berry's may have been carefully constructed, some researchers criticize meditation research in general—often with good reason—for being biased or poorly designed.

Many mindfulness studies are correlational rather than experimental, which means they are less helpful in nailing down mindfulness as the cause of any observed benefits. Also, many researchers insert their own bias into the design, sometimes employing a coauthor as the mindfulness instructor. Rosenberg worries about this as well: When you work with a charismatic teacher, she says, it's less clear if the effects of the program are due to the tools being taught or something about the teacher that makes students more committed. Issues like these and others, delineated in another recent research review by Ute Kreplin and her colleagues, can lead to overly generous interpretations.

Another problem is that much of the early research on mindfulness—and even current research, including Kreplin's and Luberto's reviews—uses multi-component interventions, which can make it hard to tease out the effects of mindful attention alone. For example, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction often involves a mixture of focused breathing, loving-kindness meditation, yoga, and walking meditation within an eight-week program. The program's excellent results are promising for people who want to take it, but how can we know that mindfulness itself accounts for its effectiveness?

Still, Rosenberg says, it's important not to go too far down this path of trying to whittle down meditation into its smallest units. After all, mindfulness meditation came to us via a long tradition of contemplative practice, and all of the practices are ultimately used to increase our attention and our ability to control our reactions to experiences. The practices were probably meant to build on one another, not be performed in isolation.

"There are many scientists, and I'm beginning to be one of them, who think that it doesn't make any sense ecologically to separate out the components of meditation, because they're intimately linked."

Berry's study avoids many of the problems outlined in Kreplin's review. His mindfulness intervention was solely focused on mindful attention and devoid of instructions in kindness or compassion; the prosocial outcomes were objectively measurable; the intervention was done by someone other than the researchers; and the study was experimental rather than correlational, including many controls. That bodes well for its significance, though Berry is still cautious, taking Kreplin's meta-analysis seriously.

"At this stage, this area of study is just taking off," he says. "Some of the findings from the meta-analysis may be based on only two or three studies. If anything, it points to the need for more research and more rigorous research."

What to make of all of this? While more research does indeed need to be done, there appears to be increasing evidence that mindfulness meditation helps people be more prosocial.

And that's good news. As mindfulness continues being promoted as a way to boost our personal well-being, it's refreshing to know that it may just be helping us create a more compassionate society, too.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

Homage to a Great Saint – Pujya Shree Atmanandji

By Mahendra Khandhar



Mahendra Khandhar was the first president of the Jain Center of Southern California (Los Angeles Jain Sangh) in 1979. He served on the Executive Committee (Board) for over a decade. He was instrumental in the formation of JAINA and its First Convention in LA (1981). He taught Pathshala for 14 years and organized children's camps. He conducted Swadhyay for 18 years in LA and does it regularly in Koba (Shrimad Rajchandra Adhyatmik Sadhana Kendra, near Ahmedabad), where he spends 6 months in a year. He was the founder president of Jain Social Group (LA) in 1984.

Prologue

In the modern materialistic world, sometime a great spiritual saint comes along who gives a message of spirituality by his life & work and provides rare guidance to the aspirants.



One such saint was the founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Adhyatmik Sadhana Kendra in Koba, Pujya Shri Atmanandji, who experienced the spiritual awakening early in his life, no doubt a carry forward (Sanskars) of previous lives. His holy life, broad scriptural knowledge and unparalleled devotion to Tirthankars & Saints, resulted in thousands of aspirants to follow his preaching, living in India and abroad. His dedication to religion & society inspired hundreds to lead divine life. People saw in him, a self-realized saint full of divinity and a spiritual leader on the path of salvation.

He contributed immensely by lectures in educational institutions, religious places, spiritual gatherings, youth seminars, pilgrimages and public health service for more than 40 years. As a saint, his vision was impartial with equality towards all religious philosophies. Then-current Indian independence struggle added patriotic color to his thinking.

In those youthful days he met many saints & monks. By 1954, Atmanandji met; Shri Ramdas Swami, Shri Shivanad Saraswati, Shri Anand Maiya, Shri Manuvarayaji Maharaj, Shri Nanchandraji Maharaj and others. He studied Hindu scriptures related to Bhakti (devotion), Gnan (spiritual knowledge) and Sadhana (spiritual pursuit). However, he was looking for the purpose of human life and goal of soul.



Just then, he came across the wonderful book, “Three Jewels of KundKundacharya” (by Gopaldas Patel) and reading of that functioned as a bridge with his spiritual Sadhana of earlier lives. It awakened him fully, gave him understanding of soul & life. He became clear about his goal: to achieve eternal happiness with peace and bliss of soul. However, it also raised a question about how to achieve it in the context of his householder life. Incidentally & fortunately in 1957, he came across another book, “Shrimad Rajchandra” (Vachanamrutji), the collection of the spiritual writings (letters, poems, preaching, discussions and diary) by the great self-realized YugPurush Shrimad Rajchandraji (Param KrupaluDev). That book answered his questions about how to achieve the goal. It was a perfect combination: the first book said “what” and the second book explained “how”. At this time he was greatly attracted and influenced by Jainism, Jain scriptures and Tirthankars’ preaching.

Family Life

Pujya Atmanandji was born as Mukund to the religious parents Virjibhai & Bhagirathiben in a Hindu Soneji family, in Ahmedabad on 2 December in 1931. He completed his MBBS medical study in 1956 at Ahmedabad, married to Dr. Sharmishthaben in 1960, and went to UK in 1961 for post-graduate medical studies, joined by Sharmishthaben later in 1963. After earning advanced medical degrees of MRCP & DTMH by Mukundbhai and D(obst) RCOG by Sharmishthaben, they returned to India in 1966 and established a private hospital in Ahmedabad, now run by their son Dr. Rajeshbhai & his wife Dr. Sheetalben Soneji.

Spiritual Pursuit

From very young age, Dr. Soneji had inclination for visiting temples, reading religious books, association with spiritual saints, meditation, Yog Sadhana, introspective thinking, daily diary of his spiritual Sadhana, devotional bhajans and patriotism. From 1967, he gradually started reducing his active medical practice to devote himself to Satsang, Swadhyay, Tirthyatra, spiritual Sadhana and detachment. He studied many Jain scriptures, e.g., Samaysar, Shrimad Rajchandra (Vachanamrutji), Ratnakarand Shravakachar, Pravchansar, Shant Sudharas, Yog Bindu, Panchastikay, Gnarnav, Yogdrashti Samuchchay, etc. He always thought over & over what he read and wrote diary about his readings, analysis and thoughts.

Self-Realization

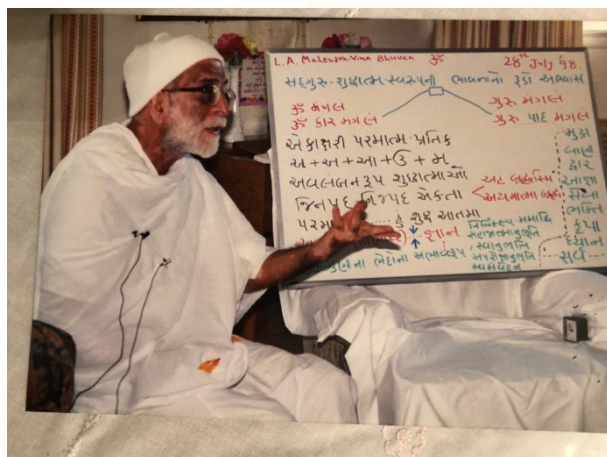
Great people always convert their problems into opportunities. In 1968, Dr. Soneji had aphthous ulcer in mouth, which became serious & life threatening. This severe illness of 5 months revived his inborn spiritual traits. During that trying time, contemplating deeply about soul & life, he attained Self-Realization on 14th February 1969. He transformed Upadhi of Vyadhi into Samadhi !

Koba Ashram

In 1975, Dr. Soneji founded Satshrut Seva Sadhana Kendra in Ahmedabad. In 1982, he shifted it to Koba (15 km from Ahmedabad) with extended activities. Later, he renamed it to Shrimad Rajchandra Adhyatmik Sadhana Kendra (Koba Ashram). It is situated in serene, peaceful and natural environment near Sabarmati River. At the Ashram, there are facilities for residence and study. There is a beautiful Jain Temple of Parshwanath Bhagvan, a wonderful Guru Mandir of Shrimad Rajchandra, Swadhyay Hall with Shantinath Bhagvan, extensive library of 15,000 books, dormitories, dining facility, Gurukul of 60 students and the primary Medical Center. Frequent medical camps are organized. He supported many compassionate activities to help poor and needy. Sahebji's autobiography ("Hirdeme Prabhu Aap"-God in My Heart) and a short documentary film on his life & work ("Suvas Sant Radayni"-Fragrance of Saint Heart) were released.

Spiritual Growth

During 1970-74, he was invited for Swadhyay-Satsang at Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Idar, Khambhat, Vadva, Naroda etc. In 1976, he took the vow of life-long celibacy in Ahmedabad, in presence of Pujya Sahajanandji Varni (Chhote Varniji) Maharaj. In 1984, he gave up the householder (Gruhasth) life, took Sanyas with dress code, undertook the pilgrimage of Girnarji Tirth and changed his name to Atmanandji as commanded and blessed by Pujya Samantbhadraji Maharaj of Kumbhoj (Maharashtra).



He was invited to UK, USA, Canada, Africa, Australia and Singapore several times during 1984-2005 by various institutions, local Jain Samaj and individual devotees for religious discourses, meditation and spiritual guidance. His preaching was experimental & experiential.

In 1990, through Institute of Jainology (London), he participated as lead saint of the august delegation and presented “Jain Declaration on Nature (Jainism and Ecology)” to Prince Philip at Buckingham Palace in London. During the centennial celebration of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1993, he effectively presented Indian Culture, Jain Religion, Bhagvan Mahavir’s message of world peace based on non-violence (Ahinsa) and Shrimad Rajchandraji’s spiritual philosophy. He was specially invited, addressed the conference and presented two papers, “Jain Approach to Self-Realization” and “Power of Prayer”.

He established “Sadguru Prasad” institute in Ahmedabad in 1999. He has given more than 10,000 Swadhyays on various spiritual topics in India and overseas. About 9000 audio and 3600 video cassettes have been prepared from his spiritual, experiential and culturally inspiring lectures. He led hundreds of Tirth Yatras and conducted many Satsang, Swadhyay, Bhakti and Dhyana Shibir. He has written, compiled, translated and edited about 45 books in Gujarati, Hindi and English on various subjects, such as, art of living, culture, nobility, spirituality and soul purification. He undertook the monthly publication of “Divya Dhwani”, depicting the teachings of great spiritual saints, religious articles, contemporary topics and inspiring anecdotes for more than 40 years, which has current subscription of about 6000 world-wide. The Ashram also publishes annual Diwali booklets.

Equanimity

Pujya Atmanandji suffered a devastating stroke of paralysis on 23 November in 2010, making his right side completely non-functional. He became totally dependent for all daily body functions. In spite of all possible medical treatment, Seva by the aspirants and prayers, his condition remained the same until the end, for more than 9 years. However, he never complained or frowned. Always positive, smiling and cordial, he continued to live with equanimity.

Our Sadguru Pujya Atmanandji



We met him first time in Koba in 1983. Listening to his “Vitrag Vani” Swadhyays touched our hearts. We were highly impressed. Met him again in 1986 in Ahmedabad and requested to come to America on a religious tour to benefit the aspirants (Mumukshus) there. Sponsored him (with the help of other aspirants) in 1987 and he stayed with us in Los Angeles for a few days, which was wonderful and enlightening. Then, accompanied him with his entourage for one month and visited many Jain Temples and Jain Sanghs in several cities in US & Canada. Staying and travelling with Pujya Shri Atmanandji gave us insight of life, soul & spirituality. It was life-transforming experience. It changed the values & purpose of our life forever for the better. We built the Sadhana Kutir in Koba Ashram in 1997, retired early in 1998, reduced social activities, took vow of lifelong celibacy

and we started going to Koba (India) every year for 6 months for Swadhyay-Satsang-Seva. We were extremely fortunate to progress on the path of salvation under the guidance and blessings of the Saint Atmanandji. He guided us on every step: retirement, Kutir in Ashram, Celibacy vow, reducing social activities, staying in Koba, Jatras, spiritual studies, meditation and worldly living. We are infinitely grateful to Sadguru Atmanandji.

Great Saint

Dr. Mukundbhai Soneji was not a great saint because he was a foreign educated specialist doctor, or he established an Ashram, or he could give excellent Swadhyays, or he changed his name to Atmanandji. He was a great saint because of the following:

- He was detached from the worldly matters
- Gave up the lucrative medical practice & hospital
- Took lifelong celibacy vow at the age of 45
- Gave up household and took Sanyas with name & dress change
- His life was an open book, simple & straightforward
- He was equanimous during 3345 days of his paralysis
- He studied and impartially respected various religious philosophies
- Remembered thousands of scriptural Shloks due to purity of soul
- He respected everybody as a soul, with love & friendship for all (Vashdhaiv Kutumbkam)
- His one & only goal was eternal happiness, bliss of soul
- Inspired & guided personally thousands of Mumukshus to lead divine life
- He himself was virtuous and always saw good & virtues in others
- He considered everybody innocent & never hurt anybody, knowingly or otherwise.

Samadhi

The divine soul of Pujya Atmanandji left the body peacefully and with equanimity at 10:58 am on Sunday January 19, 2020 in Koba Ashram, in the august presence of self-realized saints and huge gathering of divine followers and aspirants, achieving the much coveted Celebration of Life in Death, Mrutyu Mahotsav (Samadhi Maran). His final rites were done religiously in Koba Ashram complex on the same day in the afternoon.

Epilogue

The central focus of Pujya Atmanandji's life and work was to study & imbibe the literature of enlightened Jain Acharyas & other spiritual saints, and to inspire other aspirants in the areas of plain living, high thinking & spiritual Sadhana, encompassing Gnan, Bhakti, dispassion and selfless service. His life was his message. To achieve salvation through purity of soul, he recommended four sequential steps under Sadguru guidance: (1) Satsang, (2) Sadvanchan, (3) Sadvichar and (4) Sadachar.

His following life-enriching slogans are reverberating in the hearts of public at large.

"I am Soul, your Obedient Servant, Friend of all
"Speak Slowly, Lovingly, with Respect, only when Necessary"
"Adjust, Adapt, Accommodate, Accept"

Departure of Pujya Atmanandji's divine soul signifies the loss of a brilliant spiritual star of Indian Saint Tradition. His inspiration, spiritual heritage (books and cassettes), memory and spiritually trained followers will guide the millions of broad population on the path to salvation for generations to come.

Here are a few links to the videos of Atmanandji's pravachans:

Shrimad Rajchandra Patrank 105 – "Mahavir Na Bodh Ne Patra Kon?"
<https://youtu.be/H7jsZEJLAnQ>

Aatm Nirikshan Kevi Rite Karvu
https://youtu.be/dEK9E_H7NOA

Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra Gatha 138 - "Atmagnan Mateni Anivary Purva Sharat"
<https://youtu.be/GBBSixhwEi0>

Sadgurunu Sharan Aetle Shu
<https://youtu.be/s0vqscQfzNA>

Sadhak nu Samuchchay Vyaktitva
<https://youtu.be/cdj9c9GBks24>

"Atma Laksh Dwara Atmanubhuti Pratye" Samaysar Kalash 181 185
<https://youtu.be/HULMDyUeWrA>



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Love Divine

By Puja Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai



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

We all are familiar with the emotion of love. In pursuit of joy, we tend to use this emotion as a means to derive happiness from the impermanent, and suffer. Puja Gurudevshri explains how we can transform our emotion of love into devotion, which bestows true happiness.

Millions of people worship God but their lives have not undergone any transformation. Does this mean that worshipping God is of no use? No. It only means that it was not worship. An earnest cry from the heart is always answered but we have not been sincere in our prayers. We think we have prayed, but we have not offered our heart. Half-hearted prayers cannot bear fruit.

Where there is Hope there is Interest

As long as there is hope of yet getting something from the world, our focus will continue to be in it. As long as we have hope from the dream, we will stay engrossed there. Unless our love turns away from the world and towards God, our heart cannot become fertile for devotion to sprout. Devotion-prayer-worship remain merely a custom, a manipulative business, a deception because they are practised out of fear of people's opinion, herd mentality, or some worldly incentive or temptation.

We say, "Let us follow practices. Even if we gain nothing, there is no harm. And if we get something, it would be great." Devotion cannot arise with this kind of intention. We think we are intelligent, but this so called intelligence has kept us ignorant, and costs us dearly.

Want to Have Both

We use our smartness even on the spiritual path. We are calculative in trying to have both God and the world. Because of this business mentality, the intoxication that prevails in a devotee, does not manifest.

We lack the clarity of what we want. Without this understanding, we try riding on two boats – we want to live engrossed in the world and have connection with God too. How can this go on? In trying to fulfil two contradictory desires, we will break down. How can such a shattered mind be absorbed in prayer? Connection arises from inner integrity.

Devotion Begins with Freedom from Indulgence

If we awaken to this understanding, we will realise the worthlessness of such a life. The interest in worldliness will begin to fade away. Only in the state of delusion, can one be interested in worldliness. Hope of obtaining something from the world is a trait of delusion. When this interest breaks, one can connect with God. When worthless chasing after wealth, power, relations for happiness, peace, security stops, our stream of love will flow towards our inherent wealth and abode.

The day we realise that we had built our house over the mouth of a volcano, that we were only adorning our dreams, what we thought was everlasting will part away from us, that this is not the destination, it is just a station; the quest for the ultimate destination, for God will begin.

Nothing other than God is worth getting attached to. He who wishes to make his house in the world is a householder. He builds his house in sand that will be blown away. He who seeks to make God his abode is a devotee; he makes the eternal his abode.

Undivided Love

Saints play 'ektaro', a musical instrument that has just one string. It symbolises that now there remains just one string of God. No more desires. When the pain of yearning for God engulfs you, when you seek God and God alone, day and

night your heart pines for God alone, wherever you go, whatever you do, there is only God in your mind, then alone, understand that you have qualified to be one with God.

When such undivided love arises for God, the devotee rises above every worldly event. His heart is so filled with God, there remains no space for desires. There is no attraction for any object, no dependence on anything.

Such undivided love for God turns the focus inward. A supremely peaceful space that had remained elusive for lives is discovered. Thoughts fade away. The doership withers away and supreme witnessing is unveiled. Now there remains no attraction for anything. That blessed One becomes supremely detached.

Devotion and Demand

Devotion is an expression of gratitude. A devotee has glad acceptance towards everything that comes his way. He is content with whatever he gets and remains in the feeling of thankfulness. He has no inclination of complaining, demanding or changing anything.

Devotion isn't just not asking, but in love for God, one even forgets what one has. In demanding, there is intense remembrance of what one has and what he lacks. There is a hope of gaining what he lacks. But in devotion, one transcends both hope and hopelessness. There is no thought of anything other than God. And so there arises peace and bliss. When this starts to flow, it sometimes manifests externally as a song or a dance. Devotional rendering, chants, prayers, etc. are all expressions of joy, not outpouring of sadness. He who asks is not a devotee. We miss God when we ask for the world.

Means of Desire Fulfilment?

Are we interested in God or are we only using God to fulfil our desires? Our prayers have become a means to fulfil our desires.

Once a teacher asked a student, "Do you pray before you go to sleep?" The child said, "Yes". The teacher asked again, "And do you pray in the morning too?" The child asked, "Why pray in the morning? There is no darkness when I wake up. I pray at night because I am scared of darkness."

We have been taught that prayer means to ask. All our prayers are projections of our desires. Only begging; in flowery, high-sounding words. There is no touch of heart, no spontaneity. To hide ugly desires, we wrap them in good devotional words.

Right Understanding

A devotee has no desire left to ask for anything – neither from the world because he has realised the worthlessness of worldliness nor from God because he is always and already full with God. He is intoxicated with divine love. He has faith in God's grace. Even in the world, it is seen that a mother looks after every need of her child. And God is infinitely compassionate. To remind God of His responsibility, to complain of Him not giving what He is supposed to bestow, to insist on getting something from Him, is this love or business?

True faith is when we are convinced that God is not a wish-fulfilling machine and desire fulfilment is not the way to true happiness or liberation. Where there is demand, there is worldliness. Where there is contentment, there is love. A seed of bitter neem cannot grow into a tree bearing mangoes. Worldly attachment cannot result in spiritual blossoming. Without this understanding, true devotion will not arise.

Only You !

A devotee who is constantly experiencing God's presence and grace is not troubled by worries. He may be active in the world but doesn't get swayed away or forget God. His prayer has only reverence, surrender-ship, gratitude and an earnest endeavour to continually experience intimacy and oneness with God.

A devotee proclaims that I shall remain blissful under every condition. I let go of all my desires, sentiments and expectations. Let God's will alone prevail. I have bid farewell to my little self. The 'I' has died and only You remain. Only You, only You, only You.

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Anekantvad – Life Force of Jain Philosophy

By Anop R Vora, Rochester, NY



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

What is Anekantvad?

The concept of Anekantvad in Jainism signifies plurality of characteristics of a real substance or the object of knowledge or a situation. It is a theory of manifoldness of reality which teaches us that in order to arrive at the absolute truth, one should take into account all possible angles of vision regarding any object or situation. It is based on the premise that no single perspective on these entities contains the whole truth. Substance, time, place and the condition of the observers; color the judgements and viewpoints and therefore they must all be considered to arrive at the truth.

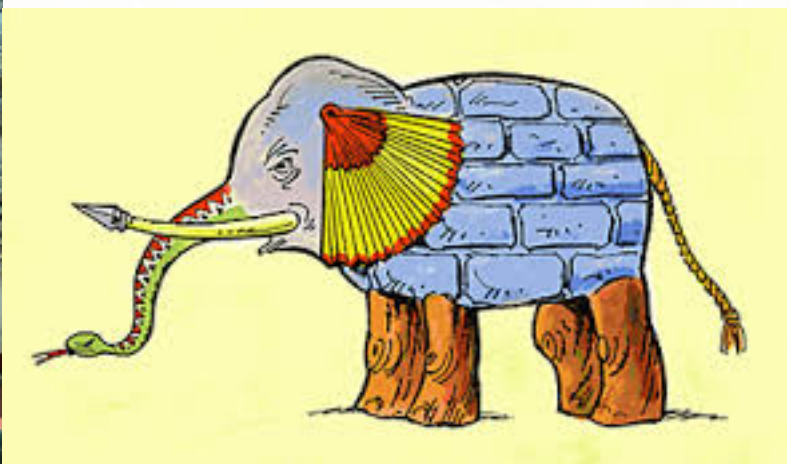
Jainism stipulates that truth in any situation or relationship is seldom absolute and one-sided and that is the reason it encourages dialogue that allows reconciliation, integration and synthesis of sometimes conflicting standpoints. It is, in a way, equivalent to spiritual democracy aimed at peace and harmony. This implies that to resolve human conflicts and disagreements, it is very imperative that all parties keep an open mind towards different opinions and do so with active listening. This would force the people involved to look at every problem through someone else's eyes.

Nayvad and Syadvad

To understand Anekantvad properly, we need to be aware of two terms called “Nayvad: and “Syadvad”. Nayvad recognizes the existence of the innumerable views (*nayas*) and Syadvad focuses on the partial truth in these views with the recognition that each view point is relative. Firstly, it is true only in the context that one has in mind. For example, same person could be a father, a husband, a son or a brother etc. Secondly, none of us has the perfect knowledge and vision; like what Tirthankaras or Kevalis possess; to know a situation or an event perfectly with 100% certainty. That is the reason every view should be listened to because each throws light on some part of the reality; each carries a strand of truth. By paying attention to all propositions, we have a much better chance to know the reality with greater precision. Once we accept this concept, it would be easy for us to at least admit that that we may be wrong! This admission is very difficult for stubborn and close minded people and attitude of this type has caused wars sometimes!

Limitations of Human Beings

Jainism says that most living human beings run around with partial and incomplete truths and thus are limited in their capacity to resolve the conflicts. Even human speech has its imperfection. We often argue based upon own ignorance. Many times we even do not know that we do not know and thus stumble in resolving our problems. If we were just to be aware of this human weakness and open up and listen to the other viewpoints, our chances of finding creative solutions would be far better. The parable below illustrates the concepts of Anekantvad and Syadvad rather neatly.



6 Blind men touching different parts of an elephant and their interpretation of what it is

It is a story of a group of blind men who have never come across an elephant before and who learn and conceptualize what the elephant is like by touching it. Each blind man feels a different part of the elephant's body, but only one part, such as the side or the tusk. They then describe the elephant based on their limited experience and their descriptions of the elephant are different from each other. In some versions, they come to suspect that the other person is dishonest.

The moral of the parable is that humans have a tendency to claim absolute truth based on their limited, subjective experience as they ignore other people's limited, subjective experiences which may be equally true. Many of us start arguing and fighting with others without taking the time to understand the real truth like the blindmen were doing in the parable above. They were not lying; but the problem was that their stance was based upon on their limited experience or a partial truth. When they listened to the elephant master who told them the real truth, they became aware of their follies.

The message from this parable is very powerful and can prove very useful in tackling many global issues. Let us look how Anekantvad can help the Jain community unite by understanding how we practice Jain religion.

Unity of Jain Community through Practice of Anekantvad

The Jain community although very small compared to many other religious communities has a lot of sects that have divided it up. That is why it is largely fragmented. There is no single voice directing us from the top. Everybody is doing their own thing and practicing the religion based upon the old traditions although the world we are living in has changed greatly. We do not even question why we do what we do. Some of the major differences in people as to how they practice the religion are eloquently expressed by Shrimad Rajchandraji in gatha 3 to 5 of Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra.

કોઈ ક્રિયાજડ થઈ રહ્યા, શુષ્કજ્ઞાનમાં કોઈ;
માને મારગ મોક્ષનો, કરુણા ઉપજે જોઈ.

In gatha 3 above, Shrimadji states that there are two groups of people: “*Kriyajad*” – those who follow religious rituals blindly and “*Shushkgyani*” – those who focus on scriptural knowledge only. The former group heavily emphasizes Kriya (Idol worship, fasting, rituals etc.); often without understanding why they are doing the Kriya. The latter group lays more emphasis on knowledge without any effort to purify themselves in order to experience the innate nature of the pure soul.

Further in gatha 131 of Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra, Shrimadji states:

નિશ્ચયવાણી સાંભળી, સાધન તજવાં નો'ય;
નિશ્ચય રાખી લક્ષમાં, સાધન કરવાં સોય.

According to Shrimad Rajchandra, a truly spiritual aspirant needs both. He has asserted that Kriya is fine as long as one is aware of one's true nature and the goal is to achieve liberation. If the end goal is lost, then Kriya alone would not take us too far. In the same way, just gaining knowledge through a deep study of scriptures and listening to the discourses is not enough either. It will remain an intellectual exercise and will not result in real transformation. It must be followed by a genuine practice of religion. Empty talk would not cut it. What we really need is a nice blend of two views because both are important for our spiritual journey.

Although we are all the followers of Lord Mahavir, the minor differences have kept us apart. In a situation like this, we really need to understand and digest the concept of Anekantvad and apply diligently. Perhaps we could forget the differences, pull the resources together, and promote our great religion cohesively for the benefit of us all. We need to realize that whatever process we use, it must result in a reduction of attachment and aversion (Rag and Dwesh) at the end; paving the way for liberation.

On a broader scale, Jainism has indeed made a significant contribution to the mankind by offering the potent concept of Anekantvad. It is often viewed as a life force of Jain philosophy and has a potential to bring world peace. The potential benefits of these ideas are phenomenal if we understand them correctly and apply in our life every single day. The opportunities to use these concepts are just endless.

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Nine Maxims of Jain Lifestyle

Written by: Acharya Shri Mahapragya Translated by: Sadhvi Vishrut Vibha (Source: Herenow4u.net)



Acharya Shri Mahapragya (14 June 1920 – 9 May 2010) was the tenth head of the Svetambar Terapanth order of Jainism. Mahapragya was a saint, yogi, spiritual leader, philosopher, author, orator, and poet. He formulated the well “Preksha Meditation” system in the 1970s, and developed the “Science of Living” education system which is a practical approach for the balanced development of a student and his character building.



Sadhvi Vishrut Vibha was initiated by Acharya Tulsi as Samani Smid Pragya, one out of six Samanijis, when the Saman order was founded in 1980. During her twelve years as Samani, she travelled to Germany, England, France, and the US. In 1992 she was ordained as Sadhvi Vishrut Vibha. She is an author of the wonderful book ‘Journey into Jain Agaam - Stories for the Young’.

The key aspects of present lifestyle are competition, rashness, impatience, intolerance, and non-restraint. These factors imbalance the secretions of endocrine glands and consequently ailments are invited. Heart specialists invariably suggest changing one's lifestyle. Spiritual leaders believe that all these are a consequence of a lifestyle devoid of spirituality. Therefore, there is need to change the way of life.

Similar voice for changing the lifestyle echoes from every corner. Acharya Tulsi has voiced his concerns directly or indirectly and presented a systematic structure of Jain way of life. This structure is designed by keeping Jain followers at the core and all human beings at periphery because it is based on the Jain values and principles. Simultaneously, it paves the path towards a healthy life which any human being can adopt. The maxims of this structure are a panacea for physical and mental ailments, valuable for emotional cure and awakener of the spiritual consciousness.

Life is an amalgamation of body, breath, sense-organs, vital energy, mind, emotion and consciousness. Such lifestyle is praiseworthy which results in a healthy body, rhythmic breath, well-functioning senses, vibrating vital energy, focused mind, pure emotions and awakened consciousness. The nine maxims of Jain lifestyle are based on this foundation.

1. Right Faith (*Samyak Darshan*)

Worldly life is concomitant with attachment. It is necessary and benevolent if it is controlled by detachment thereby keeping it in balance. A balanced life is the specific motto of a Jain lifestyle. To have faith in *dev (arihant)*, guru and dham is right faith.

The upshots of right faith are:

1. Development of right perspective
2. Development of positive attitude
3. Subsidence of intense anger, conceit, deceit and greed

Perverted perspective becomes a barrier for peaceful co-existence, humility, brotherhood, amity, simplicity and honesty in business. Right faith overcomes these obstacles and endows life with energy.

2. Relative Perspective (*Anekant*)

Relative perspective, harmony, and peaceful co-existence are fundamentals for a social life. Life is interdependent and for this reason along with giving importance to one's own views, one must understand views of others. Whoever practices relative perspective and non-persistence can live a healthy social life.

“What I think is partial truth and what others think is not the truth” is against the concept of Relative Perspective. A person can maintain happy relationships only if he maintains harmony between his own thoughts and those of others.

The development of relative and non-persistence perspective is the foundation of peaceful co-existence. Absolute perspective and persistence make the life dry, disappointing, and depressing. Lifestyle with relative perspective

develops humbleness. Consequently, quarrels and disputes are reduced and family and social life become beautiful, happy, and charming. The entire world is in dire need of improving human relationships. It can only occur with relative perspectives.

The upshots of relative perspective are:

1. Development of relative perspective
2. Development of harmonious attitude
3. Development of attitude of adjustment within controversial issues
4. Development of attitude of non-persistence and humbleness

3. Non-violence (*Ahimsa*)

Worldly life and violence are difficult to be independent of one another, yet a person endowed with right faith considers minimizing violence. This thought is an important step towards development of non-violence. The first maxim of minimizing violence is avoidance of unnecessary violence.

Man commits unnecessary violence due to remissness, attachment or craving. A person living a non-violent life should try to minimize necessary violence and avoid unnecessary violence. Cruelty is the cause of violence. Anger seems to be the reason behind suicide.

Moreover, the obvious motive behind production of cosmetics seems to be beauty and glamour, but the implicit cause is brutality. Anyone, who renounces unnecessary violence, does not misuse natural resources such as soil, water and plants.

The upshots of a non-violent lifestyle are:

1. Development of empathy or care
2. Prevention of environmental pollution
3. Development of amity for all living beings

4. Ascetic Culture (*Saman Sanskriti*)

The vital element of Jain lifestyle is saman culture. '*Saman*' is a Prakrit word, which has three forms viz. *saman*, *shaman* & *shraman*.

1. *saman*: One who is endowed with pure mind and believes in the equality of all living beings akin to his own soul.
2. *shaman*: One who purges his impulses and anger.
3. *shraman*: One who is an ascetic, industrious and self-dependent.

If I ask, 'would you like yourself to be considered inferior or lower than others, while others accept themselves as superior? Would you like someone to be aggressive frequently and misbehave with you? Would you like others to exploit you?' If the answers are all in negation, then you need to change your way of life. Respect all living beings as you would respect yourself. Never treat others inferior. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Practice to pacify your aggression and impulses. Do not impede others livelihood.

The upshots of the lifestyle of *Saman* culture are:

1. Unity of mankind
2. End of racial disgust and apartheid
3. Peaceful co-existence
4. Balanced behaviour
5. Development of self-reliance

5. Control of Desires (*Ichchha Parimaan*)

The quantity of material goods is limited, though consumption is more. The desires of consumers are even much more. To solve this problem Bhagawan Mahavir has given the maxim of limiting desires. Man does not like to live with limited ownership, whereas unlimited ownership is not acceptable for a healthy society. Therefore, the middle path is to control desires and limit one's personal ownership, accumulations and personal consumption.



Although controlling desires is a challenge in today's blind race of economic competition and growth, yet there is a solution.

The upshots of controlling the desires are:

1. Contribution while earning
2. Healthy society

6. Right Livelihood (*Samyak Aajivika*)

One cannot survive without food, and begging is denounced. Thus, the only acceptable means left for survival is establishing a livelihood. Each householder is dependent upon it for his survival. Anyone believing in non-violence and limiting desires becomes aware of pure means of making money. He does not earn simply by any means. He chooses means which harms neither his own character nor the social fabric.

The upshots of right livelihood are:

1. Purity and honesty in business
2. Avoiding businesses dealing with intoxicants such as liquor etc., non-edibles such as meat, fish, egg etc.
3. Avoiding smuggling
4. Not engaging in adulteration
5. Avoiding cosmetics business which implicitly involves violence
6. Avoiding deforestation

7. Right Values (*Samyak Sanskaar*)

An aimless life leads nowhere. Direction which leads to a destination can only be the true direction. The destination of life should be the ground of equanimity, balance and self-victory. The inculcation of such values is required right from the onset of life. Personality is judged through values and deportments during specific occasions such as ceremony of birth, naming, wedding, festival and at the time of someone's demise. The values of Jain lifestyle should not go against space and time, should not be entangled in unrealistic traditions, should not lead to blind imitation and unhealthy entertainment and should not sow the seed of violence and antagonism in the society.

The upshots of right values are:

1. Use of the word 'Jai Jinendra' in greetings, letter writing etc.
2. Priority of the Jain pictures and quotations in house decorations

8. Purity of Food and Addiction-Free Life (*Aahar Shuddhi aur Vyasan Mukti*)

Purity of food is not a subject matter confined only to religious books but has also become the concern of medical health and behavioral psychology. As per an old saying - as is the food, so will be the mind. Science has contributed marginally more - as is the food, so will be the neurotransmitter and as is the neurotransmitter, so will be the behavior.

Non-vegetarian food causes contraction of blood capillaries and increase possibility of heart problems and diseases.

Liquor affects lungs and liver. Tobacco contains nicotine which is a harmful element. Anyone who consumes tobacco in the form of cigarette, bidi, zarda or pan-parag (indigenous tobacco addictions), nicotine gets accumulated in the body, which causes contraction in the blood vessels and the consumer is more prone to having heart disease, cancer and many other diseases.

Other addictions such as gambling create stress. Therefore, a man wishing for mental peace and happiness, gambling is a curse. It is necessary to stay away from it.

The upshots of purity of food and addiction free life are:

1. Healthy and balanced life
2. Improvement in physical, mental and emotional health
3. Away from criminal attitudes

9. Ethnic Affection (*Saadharmik Vaatsaly*)

Many factors are responsible for the establishment of social organization. Organizations are based on tribes and some are based on clans within the tribe. Some associations are religion based. People having faith in the same religion have the feeling of unity. To strengthen such feelings, a powerful maxim is - the one who believes in Namaskar Mahamantra is my brethren.

The first purpose of *Saadharmik Vaatsaly* is to keep the homo-ethnic person stable in religion.

The second purpose is - the person who is not Jain by birth can become Jain through his actions and can lead a good life by accepting purity of food and addiction free life with right faith.

Jain religion could reach to the common masses in south India because of its pragmatic form of the four-fold charity applied due to *Saadharmik Vaatsaly*.

The four types of charity are that of - education (*gyaan*), health-treatment (*chikitsa*), livelihood (*anna*) and fearless environment (*abhaya*).

The upshots of *Saadharmik Vaatsaly* are:

1. Love for non-violence
2. Communal harmony
3. Religious or sectarian harmony

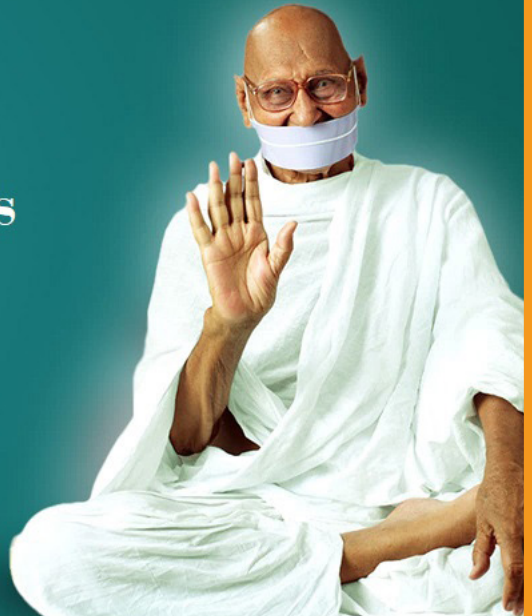
To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

**What is good -
to remember or to forget ?**

**Try to forget which creates
tension.**

You will be happy!

- Acharya Mahapragya



Honoring Padma Award Winners from the Jain Community

Compiled by Giriraj Jain



Giriraj Jain is the section editor of information section of Jain Digest, previously served in the Board and executive committee Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC), and a dedicated volunteer at JCNC. By profession, he is a software engineer and lives in Cupertino, California. e-mail: girirajjain@yahoo.com

The Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honors of India announced annually on the eve of Republic Day. The Awards are given in three categories:

- Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service)
- Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher order)
- Padma Shri (distinguished service).

All persons without distinction of race, religion, occupation, position or gender are eligible for these awards. However, Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards.

The award seeks to recognize works of distinction and is given for distinguished and exceptional achievements/service in all fields of activities/disciplines. An illustrative list of the fields is as under:

- Art (includes Music, Painting, Sculpture, Photography, Cinema, Theatre etc.)
- Social work (includes social service, charitable service, contribution in community projects etc.)
- Public Affairs (includes Law, Public Life, Politics etc.)
- Science & Engineering (includes Space Engineering, Nuclear Science, Information Technology, Research & Development in Science & its allied subjects etc.)
- Trade & Industry (includes Banking, Economic Activities, Management, Promotion of Tourism, Business etc.)
- Medicine (includes medical research, distinction/specialization in Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Sidhha, Allopathy, Naturopathy etc.)
- Literature & Education (includes Journalism, Teaching, Book composing, Literature, Poetry, Promotion of education, Promotion of literacy, Education Reforms etc.)
- Civil Service (includes distinction/excellence in administration etc. by Government Servants)
- Sports (includes popular Sports, Athletics, Adventure, Mountaineering, promotion of sports, Yoga etc.)
- Others (fields not covered above and may include propagation of Indian Culture, protection of Human Rights, Wild Life protection/conservation etc.)

The Padma Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year. The nomination process is open to the public. Even self-nomination can be made.

HOW MANY PADMA BHUSHAN AWARDEES?

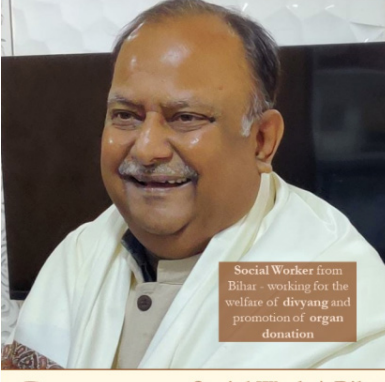
• AS OF 2019, THE AWARD HAS BEEN BESTOWED ON 1254 INDIVIDUALS INCLUDING 96 NRIS.

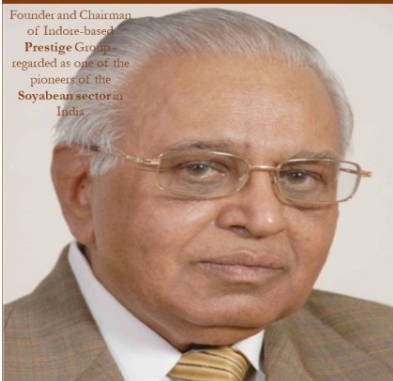
YEAR	US/TOTAL	YEAR	US/TOTAL
2010	4/43	2011	0/31
2012	4/28	2013	3/23
2014	2/24	2015	4/20
2016	1/19	2017	0/7
2018	1/9	2019	1/14

The highest order of Padma awards that can be awarded to any NRI is Padma Bhushan. Here is some data (Courtesy: Dr. Nitin Shah, Los Angeles, California) on number of Padma Bhushan awards for last 10 years and how many of them were given to people in USA.

For the year 2020, there were many Jain community members who were recipients of prestigious Padma awards, including Dr. Jagdish

Sheth, a known Jain community member from USA who was awarded Padma Bhushan. Here are details on few of the Jain community members who received the Padma awards for year 2020.

Jagdish Sheth Globally renowned Marketing Guru - specialising in global competition and strategic thinking  Literature and Education USA Padma Bhushan 2020 Globally renowned Marketing Guru – Specializing in global competition and strategic thinking.	Bimal Kumar Jain Social Worker from Bihar - working for the welfare of divyang and promotion of organ donation  Social Work Bihar Padma Shri 2020 Social Worker from Bihar – working for welfare of divyang and promotion of organ donation.	Meenakshi Jain Senior Historian and Political Scientist - known for her scholarly contributions to Indian history  Literature and Education Delhi Padma Shri 2020 Senior Historian and Political Scientist – known for her scholarly contributions to Indian history
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Nemnath Jain Founder and Chairman of Indore-based Prestige Group, regarded as one of the pioneers of the Soyabean sector in India  Trade and Industry Madhya Pradesh Padma Shri 2020 Founder and chairman of Indore-based Prestige Group regarded as one of the pioneers of the Soyabean sector in India.	Shanti Jain Veteran Bhojpuri, Maithili & Magahi singer - carrying forward the rich folk music tradition of Bihar  Art Bihar Padma Shri 2020 Veteran Bhojpuri, Maithili & Magahi singer – carrying forward the rich and folk music tradition of Bihar	Sudhir Jain Senior Engineering Professor specializing in earthquake engineering and structural dynamics - credited for the development of IIT Gandhinagar, as its Founder Director  Science and Engineering Gujarat Padma Shri 2020 Senior Engineering Professor specializing in earthquake engineering and structural dynamics – credited for the development of IIT Gandhinagar.
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On behalf of JAINA, we congratulate all the Padma awards winners!

(Ref: <https://padmaawards.gov.in/AwardeeTickets2020.aspx>)

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

JAINA Committee – World Community Services

By Giriraj Jain



Giriraj Jain is the section editor of information section of Jain Digest, previously served in the Board and executive committee Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC), and a dedicated volunteer at JCNC. By profession, he is a software engineer and lives in Cupertino, California. e-mail: girirajjain@yahoo.com

[JAINA accomplishes its goals through more than 35 committees. The editorial team of Jain Digest plans to bring you more information about the goals, future plans and past accomplishments of these committees. In this issue, we are featuring World Community Services (WCS) committee.]

Mission of the World Community Services (WCS) committee

WCS was formed in 1990 by then JAINA president Dr. Dhiraj Shah. The mission of WCS committee is to provide humanitarian services all around the world with an emphasis on India. WCS also aims to provide medical services to disadvantaged and poor people and be at the forefront of helping in emergency situations such as earthquakes, famine, floods and hurricanes, among other scenarios.

Current committee members of WCS are Prakash Mehta (Chairman), Bachubhai Ajemrea and Bhadrash Dhila. WCS committee members works in association with a number of dedicated volunteers across the world to help identify the areas/projects to work upon and execute.



WCS gets involved and provides a helping hand whenever and wherever a disaster strike. WCS volunteers work directly in the affected area to deliver aid, keeping in mind the Jain principles. WCS efforts are always directed towards projects with long term benefits like building a school, hospital, housing or a rehabilitation center.

Coronavirus Relief Efforts



Currently, the communities across the world are dealing with an outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and people are following public health preparedness guidance. The COVID-19 pandemic marks an unprecedented time in modern history that will require the best of humanity to overcome. COVID-19 has claimed many lives and have impacted countless families around the world.

Due to the lockdown situation in many places, the schools are closed and the teachers are offering online classes that the students can attend from home. However, this requires the students to have a laptop or other handheld device with an internet connection. Such e-learning is difficult for those students who don't have such a device in their household.

Hence, WCS has launched a project to help provide laptops to these students so that they can continue e-learning and continue their career path during the crisis. WCS has collaborated with Sarva Mangal Family Trust and Anekant Community Center, who will work with JAINA member Jain Centers to execute this project.

You can also do your part to help COVID 19 victims by making your tax-free donations to the Coronavirus Relief Fund created by WCS. These funds will be utilized to provide hunger relief, medical aid, supplies of personal protective equipment and educational technology devices to people affected by the pandemic in the USA and India. Your donation to the Coronavirus Relief Fund will make an immediate and lasting positive impact on many lives during the most challenging times we are collectively facing. As always, JAINA only spends your funds keeping Jain Way of Life in mind and without levying any administrative fee.

Past Projects undertaken by WCS

Previously, with your support, WCS has raised thousands of dollars from the Jains in North America and all over the world such as \$750,000 for the Gujarat earthquake, \$200,000 for the Indian Ocean Tsunami, over \$80,000 for the Nepal Earthquake, etc.

There are many notable humanitarian projects carried over by WCS with your support such as Nepal earthquake (2015), Hurricane Sandy (2013), Medical and Surgical camp in Kutch (2011), Haiti Earthquake (2010), Palitana Viklang Camp (2009-2010), Mumbai floods (2005), Hurricane Katrina (2005), Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004), Earthquake in Gujarat (2001), support to drought victims in Gujarat and Rajasthan (2000), Kosovo Refugee UNO fund (1999), Cyclone in Kandla (1998), Civil war in Rwanda (1995), Earthquake in Northridge, CA (1994), Latur Earthquake (1993), Earthquake in Utter Kashi (1991) and many more.



In 2004, when a massive tsunami, after Indian Ocean earthquake, hit multiple nations around Indian Ocean, WCS/JAINA was there to join hands in rebuilding efforts of the region. WCS took the construction project for the CFO Nallah School, in cooperation with local nongovernmental organization, Bhartiya Jain Sanghatana.

Because of the devastation caused by the tsunami, children in the area were left without a school building. JAINA adopted the school project and raised funds for the project and other tsunami relief efforts by launching Tsunami Victim's relief fund.

On January 26, 2001 when a massive earthquake in Gujarat killed 30,000 plus people, injured 300,000 people and left three million people homeless, JAINA was there to provide help and support. JAINA distributed 500 blankets, 10,000 food packages, 10,000 water bottles, 1000 flashlights, sponsoring a primary school at Samkhyali near Bhachau, feeding 600 people for one month at Mandvi, immediately after the earthquake were carried out. JAINA also donated a number other relief material and medical supplies to earthquake-affected area, worth over 100 thousand dollars.

Jain association to build 250-home township in Bhuj

ABRAHAM THARIATH
in New York

The Federation of Jain associations in North America is building a 250-house township in Bhuj, Gujarat, to rehabilitate quake-hit residents. The township, being built at a cost of \$500,000, will be called Ardhaman Nagar, to commemorate the 250th birthday of Lord Mahavir who was known as Ardhaman before he became the 24th Tirthankar of Jain religion, according to Dr. Dhireg H. Shah, manager of the township project, who is sponsored by the World Community Service, the social service arm of JAINA. Shah, who is the senior chairman of the WCS, told *India Abroad*.

The township will have a school — kindergarten through high school — a library, computer center, science center, medical center and a community hall. The ground-breaking ceremony for the township was performed by Gujarat Governor Sunder Singh Bhandari on October 26. Among others attended were Gujarat Assembly Speaker Dhirubhai Shah, state Minister and Development Corporation chairman Mukesh Zaveri, District Collector M. H. Gandhavi, WCS chairman Bachubhai Ajmera and Acharya Chandanji of Veerayatan, a socio-religious organization based in Bihar. The project is expected to be completed by the end of July next year, before the start of the monsoon, Shah said.

The construction of the town-

ship is being supervised by Vardhaman Nagar Township Trust, an organization of 22 prominent citizens in the area formed for the purpose. At the ceremony, Ajmera handed over a check for Rs 10 million (about \$212,000) to Kantilal Shah, chairman of the trust, as JAINA's first of three instalments of the construction cost. The construction of the school and medical center are separately sponsored by various JAINA chapters while the elementary school is sponsored by the Jain Society of Toronto, Canada, the middle school by Jain Sangh of Tulsa, Oklahoma and the high school by Jain Center of Greater Boston, Massachusetts. The community hall and medical center is sponsored by the

Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago, Illinois, and the main road at the township by the Jain Center of Southern California, Los Angeles. The library will be sponsored by the Indian American Community in Binghamton, New York, Shah said. He said a marble plaque with the names of JAINA, Jain Center of America, New York, and the India Earthquake Relief Organization of Michigan will also be unveiled there. JAINA has chapters in 57 metropolitan cities in North America. Immediately after the killer earthquake struck Gujarat in January this year, the JAINA Charitable Trust has sent \$10,000 for immediate relief works, and distributed thousands

of blankets, food packets, bottled mineral water, flashlights and pieces of clothes and 100 wheel-chairs to help the affected people. JAINA had also sent teams of doctors and volunteers to assist in relief operations. It has also worked with various organizations in Gujarat to provide assistance. JAINA also sponsored a school at Samkhyali, near Bhachau, for the quake-affected children there. It handed over \$7,500 for the school, which was built by Bhartiya Jain Sanghatana, Shah said. The school, which was opened in February, was the first of the 300 such schools built by the Sanghatana across Gujarat. JAINA had also provided to computers to Veerayatan Vidyaapeeth.

WCS continues to carry out project after project wherever help is needed and it is only possible with your continued support. We request you to send your tax deductible (USA) contribution payable to JAINA, at World Community Services, 2060 Mother Well Ct. Oak Hill, VA 20171 or donate online: www.jaina.org/donations

I would like to Thank to Mr. Prakash Mehta (Chairman of WCS) for helping us with sharing history and details on the impactful journey of WCS.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

Significance of Jain/Indian Traditions During the Pandemic

By Giriraj Jain

Indian culture and Jain traditions have a scientific foundation that is thousands of years old. Many of these practices, that are often labeled as blind superstition, have a logical explanation behind them and most certainly has a relevance that has proved to be the best for the human being for thousands of years. While many of these practices are common among Jain and Indian community around the world, the rest of the world is also learning about them and have started following some of these practices that have proved useful to prevent spread of Covid 19 pandemic. Here are some details on few of those traditions/practices.

Namaste

The word “Namaste” has been used in Indian culture for thousands of years for greeting each other. It is derived from Sanskrit. It means “I bow down to the Divine in you”. Namaste is equivalent to “Hello” but with an element of respect, with recognition of the Divine in each one of us. It is usually spoken with a slight bow, hand pressed together, and thumbs close to chest. This gesture is also called “Anjali Mudra”; which is a common yoga pose that, according to practitioners, helps alleviate mental stress and anxiety, hence increased focus. Thus, Namaste is not just a way to greet but also has a spiritual and physical significance that we have been following for thousands of years.



In the recent times during Covid19 pandemic, world has realized the significance and importance of Namaste and adopted it as a better way to greet. It is proving to be a very helpful practice for social distancing. Medical professionals around the world are now recommending to not shake hands but use Namaste to greet instead, as it cuts down the chances of virus transmission through touch.

Ahimsa

The fundamental principle of Jainism (India's oldest religion) is non-violence (Ahimsa). As Jains, we believe each soul should be treated with compassion. Jainism goes to a great extent to protect and practice Ahimsa to prevent injuries even to small insects and microorganisms. These fundamentals of Jainism drive our dietary practices including being vegetarian.



Covid 19 virus is believed to have started from “wet market” - a marketplace selling fresh meat, fish, produce, and other perishable goods - and due to the un-hygienic conditions around these packed markets. Covid 19 infected humans that were interacting around those places and then it spread rapidly as it passed from humans to humans. There are many other viruses/pandemics that have originated from animals, like SARS, Bird flu etc; to name a few.

Covid 19 has brought the attention of the world towards banning the trade and handling of wild animals. Many local authorities are banning the trade and let the animals live peacefully in the wild. During the peak Covid 19 crisis time in China, China govt urged the citizens to give up on meat to reduce the chances of getting infected. There are social media discussions and mention about people leaning towards vegetarian diet during these days. Being vegetarian has proved that not only it is environment friendly & against cruelty to animals, but also as a healthy & safe diet preference.

Cleanliness

Cleanliness is the core mantra to prevent the spread of any kind of infection in general. During the Covid 19 pandemic, everyone is paying special attention to cleanliness like washing hands with soap for 20 seconds, using sanitizer, covering their cough, wearing face masks, not to touch infected surfaces and much more. There is an emphasis on keeping oneself clean and uncontaminated to help fight spread of the pandemic.



Cleanliness drive to fight against spread of corona virus doesn't stop at washing your hands only, it extends to your surroundings and the surfaces you may come in contact with. To help reduce the spread of corona virus, world is practicing social distancing. Citizens are also advised to wear mask while going out in public areas. Some areas where social distancing restrictions have to be eased out, special attention is given on cleanliness of the common public areas. There is an increased emphasis by local administrations to cleaning up the streets, parks, shopping areas, public transportations and many other places where people interact with each other. Many businesses and corporations are making sure that the guidelines provided by medical professionals to reduce the chances of spreading the virus are followed.

Imposing shelter in place on people to reduce chances of getting infected by Covid 19 has created another health issue. People tend to eat more junk food to reduce boredom of staying at home all the time! Citizens are being advised to eat healthy, do exercise/yoga and practice intermittent fasting to help alleviate the issue.

Jainism has put a lot of emphasis on cleanliness as part of the religious practices from the days of its inception thousands of years back. Jainism has practices established to clean your soul, body and surroundings. Concept of cleanliness extends to clean, pure and safe food as well.

Cleanliness and healthy habits start from our Sadhu/Sadhvis. Digambar Sadhu/Sadhvis always keep Picchi (“पीछी”) and Kamandal (“कमंडल”) with them all the times. Shwetambar Sadhu/Sadhvis always keep Oga (“ओगा”) and Kamandal (“कमंडल”) with them. Picchi/Oga is used to remove insects in their path or the places they sit or sleep. This assures that the insects are not harmed and also results in cleaner surrounding. Kamandal is filled with water that is boiled and used to wash hands and feet.

Shwetambar Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi Sadhu/Sadhvis also use Muhapatti to prevent saliva from coming into contact with sacred books. Muhapatti also reduces the chance of inhaling small insects and other airborne life as well as harming them by the warm air exhaled while breathing.



The food prepared in common Jain households using Jain principles is pure and healthy. Water is always filtered and preferably boiled. Groceries and raw material are cleaned before being cooked. Food items having high probability of insects in them are avoided. More restrictions are followed during Charturmas (Monsoon season) as the risk of insects in the food increases. Eating before sunset is essential and there are many other practices to assure that the food is safe and healthy. Fasting is common and often practiced in various formats which helps Jains around the world to live a healthy life.

Spirituality

Another important change we have observed during this pandemic is the surge in spiritual practices. All over the world, spiritual leaders and guides are helping their followers with guidance on how to handle fear, emotions, boredom, anxiety, etc. Many people are using the extra time they have to listen to religious discourses, practice Yoga and meditation, and learning to accept the challenges the pandemic has created. Compassion for those who are suffering and honoring those who are in the front lines of fighting this pandemic; is being witnessed in every corner of the world. Generosity of people helping those in need is also unprecedented.

The Jain way of life has all these attributes. Jain philosophy gives a lot of importance to virtues such as compassion, generosity, self-control (*sanyam*), glad acceptance and advises people to do bhakti, satsang, samayik, meditation, etc. Following this advice has been crucial in the current environment.

As we see, our traditions have a number of practices that are backed by science and logical explanation that are relevant for centuries and still useful during these challenging days of Covid 19. We wish our readers all the best. Stay healthy and safe and keep following the guidance and instructions from authorities.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

Humanity around the Globe: Inspiration amid Pandemic

Compiled by Reena Shah, Dilip Parekh

Amid the fear of the coronavirus pandemic, it can be hard to find things to be positive about. With new anxiety-inducing developments spilling into the news every day, all the stockpiling and social distancing the panic can become overwhelming. However, it's important to remember that moments of crisis do in fact often bring out the best in people. This is an attempt to bring you a few stories from around the world to show the best that came out in people during this challenging time from different sources.

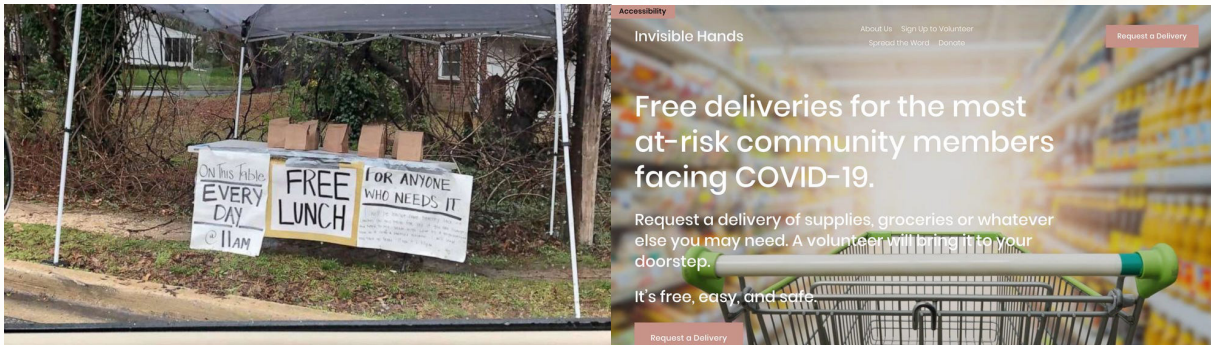


United Kingdom:

- * 125,000 birthday cards were sent to Capt. Tom Moore, a former British Army Officer, for his 100th birthday on April 30. **He raised 40 million pounds for protective gear for front-line workers by walking laps in his backyard.** (Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sahneJv198>). On May 20th, 2020 Prime Minister Boris Johnson called him a "True National Treasure" and nominated him for Knighthood.
- Hundreds of thousands of people signed up to join the NHS's volunteer army, smashing the government's recruitment target. Stephen Powis, NHS England medical director, said there had been "outbreaks of altruism" and he was "bowled over" by the response from volunteers. And to connect with each other, people have been putting images of rainbows in their windows and on their balconies, in a colorful sign of optimism. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52068233>

USA:

- First responders and health care professionals were surprised with free groceries at the checkout at Winn-Dixie and other super markets in seven states. Southeastern Grocers, which owns all BI-LO, Fresco y Mas, Harveys Supermarket and Winn-Dixie stores, surprised community heroes at the checkout to honor those working on the front lines. "Your groceries are on Winn-Dixie tonight. Thanks for everything you do," the health care workers were told. "Thanks for being on the front line."
- 'We miss you guys too': Kids get a surprise visit from a caravan of teachers. A group of teachers in Santa Clara, California, teamed up to bring a little joy to their students and their families. The teachers formed a caravan and drove by their students' homes to say hello. Students waved and cheered as teachers honked from their cars in a sweet moment of solidarity.
- In Severna Park, Maryland, a mystery resident has left bagged lunches outside a busy roundabout for "anyone who needs it" every day at 11 a.m. A sign left with the bagged meal reads: "For anyone who needs it: I will be leaving some healthy sack lunches on this table for you if you are hungry and need to eat. Made with love by a neighborhood mom in a clean and sanitized kitchen. I will leave this table up from 11am - 1:30pm"



- In a similar story of helping elderly people out, Liam Elkind, a junior at Yale, and Simone Policano, an actor and producer, created a network called “Invisible Hands,” where they recruit members of the community who are least at risk for contracting COVID-19, and enlist them to provide services to the elderly and others who are most at risk. In order to request a delivery, you simply go to their website, fill out a form with the details of your request, and a volunteer will call to confirm what you need. The volunteer will then pick up those items and deliver them while maintaining proper social distancing.

Canada:

Dubbed in Canada as the antithesis to the term “fearmongering,” people are beginning to come together to celebrate “caremongering”, by practicing acts of kindness during the coronavirus outbreak. Many of these caremonger groups have mobilized through social media. Some provide food and medical supplies to those in need, while others run errands or serve as a platform to recruit volunteers to help the most vulnerable. <https://www.insider.com/times-people-spread-kindness-during-coronavirus-pandemic-2020-3>

Spain and Italy:

In Spain, cheers and applause have been heard around 10 p.m. throughout multiple cities including Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia. In turn, Spanish healthcare workers responded with a heartwarming video thanking the public for their respect and for staying inside.

In Spain, there was also a moment of silence and flags at half-mast for the thousands who have died. Both Spain and Italy have seen acts of kindness as people try to deliver messages of hope. On the streets of Naples in Italy, residents offer free food for whoever needs it. In Rome, Italian football club AS Roma is delivering care packages including essential supplies to its most vulnerable fans. In Spain, an initiative delivers hundreds of free meals to front-line staff in Barcelona. Medical staff in Spain are being pushed to their limits and face a real risk of infection, with more than 12,000 confirmed infections among healthcare workers to date, according to the El Pais newspaper. In Spain, a doctor’s online plea for letters to those who had been hospitalized by coronavirus received an overwhelming response. Tens of thousands of letters were sent by well-wishers.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/newsfeed/2020/04/italy-spain-remember-dead-200406103620030.html>

Each night, quarantined citizens in Spain pay a stirring tribute to the health care workers who are on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic. The country introduced a two-week state of emergency a couple of weeks ago that bans people from leaving their homes unless there are extenuating circumstances. Since then, residents in apartments nationwide have joined together during various times in the evening to applaud and bang kitchen implements in a show of solidarity.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/spain-medical-workers-coronavirus_n_5e720084c5b6eab7793f6ac5?7qp

Australia:

- Dr Catherine Barrett, Director at anti-ageism advocacy organization, Celebrate Ageing in Australia created The Kindness Pandemic, Facebook group to set off a chain reaction of intergenerational kindness in the context of COVID-19 coronavirus. Catherine says she was motivated by “anxiety on social media as well as stories of panic buying and aggression in supermarkets and calls from people asking, ‘where is the kindness?’” She said, “My favorite stories from the group are the simple acts. Giving chocolates to staff in supermarkets, the families waving to older people outside the residential aged care window, the hampers and coffee people buy for each other, the sharing of toilet paper, the Health Care Hero awards being given to health care workers, and the landlords reducing rent for tenants who have been made redundant.”
- Another story shared on this page in Australia is: “I just went to our local Coles in Braybrook, to do a little shop. I grabbed a few cans of red bull and a dozen chocolate bars. I went up to the service desk and told the girl behind the counter that I’d like to purchase all this for the staff for their morning breaks. She was shocked. ‘OMG really?’ she said. She told her other colleague who said she was just about to cry. ‘That’s so sweet’ she said, ‘especially with what’s going on.’ She gestured to her manager who was in the middle of being berated by a customer who was complaining about limited stocks. I told the staff I wanted them to know how appreciated they were and I said as far as I’m concerned you’re our new firefighters. I’m so glad I did this. It felt great. It felt right and the amount of endorphins released was amazing.” <https://www.marieclaire.com.au/covid-19-coronavirus-the-kindness-pandemic-facebook-group>
- In Queensland, Australia, Addyson (age six) and Lucy (age four), held a toy in one hand while dragging a cart in the other. While seeing empty shelves at the store, six-year-old Addyson got the idea to use her tooth fairy money to buy rolls of toilet paper for struggling pensioners. At a time when stockpiling supplies has become a norm, these two youngsters could be spotted knocking on doors of elderly neighbors, with a wooden cart piled with toilet paper and tissue boxes, asking if they would like any. One delighted woman offered the girls a bag of “fairy crystals” in return. Another man took rolls for a neighbor across the street who was unwell and couldn’t go to the store.



India:

In India, along with many charities, **Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur (SRMD)** and **Shrimad Rajchandra Atma Tatva Research Center, Parli** have started several relief activities for the underprivileged out of compassion and support for them.

- Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur (SRMD) has set up relief funds to support hospitals with beds, ventilators, preparation and distribution of meals to doctors, nurses, policemen and government officials, disposables and other essential medical equipment, provide ration to a daily wage for a month, and provide food to stray animals. <https://www.srmd.org/en-US/coronavirus-pandemic-relief-initiatives/>
- On May 6th, the national news channel “India TV” featured SRMD as a Global Mission unlocking health and hope in over 50 cities across 5 continents amidst the Coronavirus Pandemic. The special feature in their program *‘Hum Hindustani’ shows how by the inspiration of Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai, founder of SRMD, an army of thousands of volunteers have set out to support all forms of lives through multiple relief initiatives. Watch the entire feature which highlights the Mission’s philosophy in action amidst the Coronavirus Crisis here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUMP_6_VNmk
- Shrimad Raj Chandra Atma Tatva Research Center has launched two drives: Preventive care drive and Grocery distribution drive. The Preventive Care Drive comprises of visits by healthcare workers & volunteers to spread awareness with respect to importance of social distancing, correct methods to cough/sneeze, wash hands, etc., distribution of essential kits including items like liquid hand soaps (FDA approved), etc., distribution of snack packs (FSSAI approved) and essential medicines, distribution of masks to susceptible cases, providing support to the Govt. medical centers with medical infrastructure & equipment. The Grocery Distribution Drive comprises of grocery kit that will suffice to sustain a livelihood for a month of one household with 8 persons. With close to \$2 a day one

can support a family of 8 for a month. Around 3000 families and close to 60 villages have benefitted from this initiative. https://vitragvigyaan.org/home/mission_2020

The inspirational work by Atma Tatva Research Center was covered by media extensively in the past few months: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnGbBdzBOiQ> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzWYWduOY2k>

These inspiring stories around the world inspire us to do the same. In times of crisis people can be amazing. When tragedy strikes, people band together in solidarity. Age, wealth, race, religion, politics, and all the other things that make us who we are as individuals seem to matter a little less, and the fact that we are all human in this world together comes to matter more. The coronavirus pandemic is shutting down national economies, while also causing illness and death. Despite the fear and uncertainty, it is truly inspirational to see how people want to help and be there for each other during this Pandemic. We hope that after reading these stories, it will inspire people to do similar things in their communities and help them realize that we will get through this together.

A few more Inspiring Videos

An Anthem For Our Time: Superhero

“Do we wanna wait for [your favorite superhero] / Or is it our time now / To bring the good back in?” Superhero is an ode to each and every hero in our lives who embodies resilience and care frontline workers, teachers, grocery store workers, farmers and just maybe ... us. We thank those who show us that we are strong and, together, even stronger. <https://www.karunavirus.org/story/703/an-anthem-for-our-times-superhero>

The Corona Virus Story: The Tale of Two Worlds

This lovely video tells a bedtime story about the coronavirus, a tale of two worlds. The first world is pre-coronavirus and made up of waste, poverty, loneliness and pollution. The second world is post-coronavirus, after “the great realization” has taken place and when people could see the truth. It’s by New Zealand poet Tomos Roberts, aka “Tom Foolery.” <https://www.karunavirus.org/story/862/the-coronavirus-story-a-tale-of-two-worlds-and-the-great-realization>

‘From Scare-Mongering To Care-Mongering’: 2 Minutes For The Human Race

At a time when the human spirit is being tested like never before, there are countless “reasons to believe” in the middle of the coronavirus crisis. Two minutes of heartwarming moments of compassion flood the screen -- a tribute to the daily miracles of these times -- in an unlikely and smile-inducing offering “to the human race” from the makers of Coca-Cola. <https://www.karunavirus.org/story/878/two-minutes-for-the-human-race>



Pictures of India Gate, Delhi, before and after the lockdown

A Short Video titled “Lockdowns lead to air pollution drops in major cities” on CNN

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/22/world/air-pollution-reduction-cities-coronavirus-intl-hnk/index.html>

Sources: <https://www.insider.com> <https://www.huffpost.com>

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/love-care-amid-coronavirus-crisis-good-news-happening-69624293>

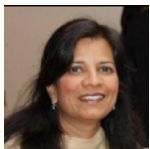
<https://www.karunavirus.org> <https://www.bbc.com>

<https://www.aljazeera.com> <https://www.marieclaire.com.au>

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

A Soulful Comeback

By Reena Shah



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. Email: mail2reenakothari@yahoo.com

Jill Bolte Taylor was a healthy 37-year-old neuroanatomist at Harvard when, one morning in 1996, she suffered a massive stroke in the left hemisphere of her brain. In four hours, she lost her ability to walk, talk, read, write, and remember parts of her past. Yet Taylor not only recovered completely—a process that took eight years—but regards her stroke as a positive event that left her with a sense of peace, a less-driven personality, and new insight into the meaning of life.

In her **TED Talk** in February 2008 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyyjU8fzEYU>), she recalls feeling an intense sensation of inner harmony and deep connection during the stroke that has remained with her. She believes this state of awareness is available to all people if they know how to look for it. This resonated with the Jain belief of the soul being a separate entity from the body. It felt in the moment that her soul had the ability to watch what was happening to the body and gave her the strength to fight back with the right side of her brain to seek help to revive her body. It is utterly surprising yet inspirational to see how her soul had this immense strength and power to watch her brain functions that shut down one by one: motion, speech, memory, self-awareness...and yet she could narrate all this later!

How else does one explain this powerful and inspirational story of a comeback from a near death experience? Most of us cannot even tolerate a simple headache or high fever and focus all of our energy on the body in that moment of suffering.



But as Jill's consciousness progressed through the stroke, she became aware of the energy that flows through each and every one of us. She felt the full force of her connection with the Universe. However, since her left brain was not functioning, she couldn't remember how to speak, count, or do any of the left-brain activities that most of us take for granted. Her soul also had so much of stamina and ability to sustain (*virya*) that it could prevail. Not only did the soul give her the strength to seek help as her body was shutting down, but it also endured the fruition of karma in a very positive and equanimous way. She endured 8 years of rehab with equanimity and left it with a new life.

This soulful comeback piqued my curiosity to know more about her life story through her interview with **Oprah on OWN**. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5d9YyxI8i4>) Her interview was another window to her soulful journey as a new Jill. Her bold remark about her desire to witness her own death fascinated me as a Jain. She sounded like a knowledge-thirsty soul (*jignasu jeev*) when she said "I want to be alive when I die. I would like to watch my death." Fearlessness, confidence, curiosity, and *gnaata drashta* qualities of a soul were realized in that one statement. She in fact considers herself a stroke triumphant and not a stroke survivor since she was reborn with this new nameless/egoless identity. She shares, "I lost my ego, lost the sense of 'I am,' lost my name, with no PhD and Harvard attached to this new identity". She had the sense of oneness and peace and connection to humanity. What she gained was this incredible knowingness of inner peace and excitement of realizing that everything was inter-connected, and she lost the boundary of her body and felt that she was enormous, as big as the universe. She felt that she was no longer defined or limited by her identity since she had lost all boundaries of where she began or where she ended. It was a fascinating pure world of limitless opportunities for this burden less soul. Most of us succumb to the pressure or burden of carrying and holding the ego. Very often people with disabilities are considered limited in their cause of their disability but she found liberation and freedom in that "disability" of hers where she began afresh after she lost all connection with her old self, Dr. Taylor.

Another quality of soul that I witnessed here was its knowledge virtue (*Gyaan Gun*). Her soul's ability to feel emotions (*sanvedanshilita*) coupled with its use of her scientific knowledge in the moment, to be able to feel and apply her

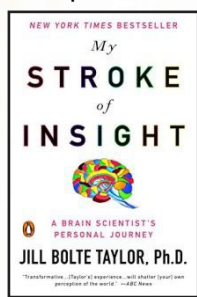
knowledge (*gyaan*) to her situation and recognize it is simply amazing. The juxtaposition of emotional (soul's ability to feel) and scientific data (*gyaan*) combines the left and right brain and is a very powerful tool. This is a huge example of bravery. This is what makes her speech and interview so very memorable.

Although recovering from her stroke was incredibly difficult, Jill makes it very clear that her stroke has made her who she is. During her stroke, she found herself at peace – in “nirvana,” in a state of not wanting anything. And when she woke up in the hospital, she then realized that if she could find this kind of peace, then so could everyone else..

Her talk is so mesmerizing that it feels as if she is a spiritual person giving a discourse, raising her hands to the sky like a preacher. She allows the force of her personality and the power of her story to come through. We live and feel the vivid experience with her. Her story is inspirational and memorable because she shares it from the heart. The *karmoday* in her life gave her a way to positively change her life and the world around her. Although most of us have not endured a stroke, her story is relatable and relevant. Sometimes, such negative or disastrous moments in our lives reform us. Her inspirational story helps us find our own nirvana. In that moment of new awareness, she shared a message for hospitals: they should be places to conserve energy instead of expending it and that she “really needs people to take responsibility for what kind of energy they bring” to her. She was glad that embarrassment was no longer in her brain circuit. Embarrassment is the result of a hurt ego, and in her new egoless state, she had left behind all those negative emotions.

The best part of this new identity was that there was no “brain chatter” for her anymore. According to Urban Dictionary, “brain chatter” can be described as the high-intensity inner monologue (in some cases dialogue) that distracts or interrupts activities in the external world. In other words, it is the *sankalp vikalp* that a brain (*buddhi*) does continually. For Jill it was tranquil, peaceful and beautiful in there (once brain chatter stopped), and she felt so whole and enormous. In the absence of attachment to the left brain, she discovered her new egoless identity. Interestingly, she and her mother grieved about the loss of her old Doctor self. She had to let it go as she could not identify with that old self anymore and had none of her memories. If a soul (*jeev*) would loosen the grip of ego in their lives, a new identity and self would be easily reborn that would liberate them from the cycle of transmigration. Since she was reborn, she lost her emotional baggage, and started afresh at the age of 37. She chose not to create new baggage as she didn't like the way it ran in her body. For example: if we are sad, our body gets affected and our throat tightens and affects us physiologically. In fact, it is our *bhaav* that makes us sad or happy, adding to our karmas. In her case, she (her soul) found the solution to it by deciding to not let those thoughts and ideas that are generated by our ego run her brain. She controlled her thoughts. She tells us that we all have the ability to focus our mind on what we want it to focus on as we make the rules of the new game. And as soon as we change the way we interact with other people, the rules and the game will change it. It demands change to happen and it is beautiful and liberating. We are in total control of our *bhaav* and have the ability to take it in the right direction just as she is suggesting. What we need to do is to pay attention to what we are thinking and not our thoughts. It is not that difficult to change the course of our *bhaav* (thoughts). One has to allow oneself to take responsibility for those thoughts to bring peace. She told Oprah, “Pay attention to self-talk and take responsibility for that voice.”

Jill's phenomenal journey of recovery inspired her to share – “the idea worth spreading” – around the globe through her book **My Stroke of Insight**. But more inspirational is the fact that she wants us to know that all of us have the ability to reach a state of oneness with the universe. We all have the ability to watch the body and what it goes through, without getting involved in this world full of illusion (*mayavi sansaar*) which reduces the power of the soul. What can the brain teach us? She tells us to pay attention to how things feel in our body. When we get angry it takes 90 seconds in that moment to dodge that anger. So why do people harbor angry thoughts for years? It is because they keep rethinking the same thought, which re-stimulates the emotional circuitry and reruns the loop. She had a stroke of insight and identified her purpose. Her purpose is to help other people recognize that they do have deep inner peace in the right hemisphere. “I've been given twelve years I almost didn't have,” says Jill Taylor. “To me, that is precious, sacred time. I wake up every morning, wiggle my toes and my fingers, and say to them, ‘Good morning, girls! Thanks for another great day.’” A tremendously positive soulful message to transform our lives!



The Process of Inner Growth

By Ramesh Khandhar



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

What is Inner Growth?

Happiness, compassion, wisdom, and clarity are inherent qualities within all human beings. The true nature of the mind is gentle, peaceful and clear. This seems difficult to believe because most of the time our minds are in a state of anxiety, agitation, desire, passion, anger, or grief - all of which obscure our true essence. A spiritual aspirant realizes that there are two dimensions of our existence. One is an external dimension of form - our body and mind - which is temporary. The other is an inner dimension - the formless, the soul - which is eternal. Such an aspirant has a strong desire to focus on the formless dimension which requires one to reprogram the inner structure of wrong beliefs, thoughts, feelings and emotions.

In this article we refer to this transformational process as “Inner Growth.” In this process one comes face to face with the mind and learns about it at a deeper level. This leads to insight into the illusion we have created about ourselves and the nature of life. The awareness of our formless dimension brings a knowing, a feeling of oneness with all beings and prevents us from being obsessed with material wealth. This is a state of consciousness in which there is absolute inner peace that isn't diminished by anything going on in the outside world. The process of inner growth allows us to extend beyond our perceived limitations to the fullness of our divine potential.

What are the transformational steps in the process of inner growth?

1. Developing “Tatva Drashti”

Drashti is defined as the focus of our attention in our material and spiritual activities. When the Drashti is shifted from achievements in our daily life to knowing and realizing our true identity - the nature of true self - it is called Tatva Drashti. In order to develop Tatva Drashti, we need to contemplate on four important questions related to self-inquiry; 1) Who am I? 2) Where did I come from? 3) What is my true identity? 4) Are relations with others real or ephemeral? With the help of scriptural knowledge and proper guidance from a spiritual master, the intense self-inquiry will lead us to believe that we are not body, mind and senses, but that we are a pure, peaceful, powerful and blissful soul. This will help us steer away from the unending desires of the mind and move towards a more content life.



(Image by Gerd Altmann from pixabay.com)

2. Managing expectations

Our past conditioning gives rise to future expectations. Our expectations keep interfering with the joy a natural flow offers. The main reasons for our sadness are our expectations, our likes and dislikes. The egoic mind always wants to change the circumstances to fulfill its expectations. It thrives on changes and challenges. We need to move beyond the ego, which we have defended for most of our lives. We need to learn to accept things as they are and go with the flow. When we shift our awareness from the egoic self to the true self, we experience the way things are. We realize that no event is good or bad. Our mind has been colored by wrong beliefs and past conditioning, and has perceived

events as good or bad. However, through the lens of awareness, everything is perceived positively. Once freed from expectations, the ego is no longer relevant and we enjoy the fruits of inner transformation, which is bliss. Every moment of our life becomes natural, serene, more alert and conscious to preserve the inner peace and joy.

3. Introspection of thoughts and reactions to events

An average person has more than 60,000 thoughts per day, of which more than half are hurtful and negative and more than 90% are repeating thoughts from the past. We need to learn to focus our mind on positive and spiritual thoughts. We also need to examine our reactions to any challenging events that have occurred, examine our behavior, emotions, and thoughts and reflect upon our belief system. Diving deeper into ourselves and doing a careful, unbiased review of our behavioral tendencies will help us develop capacity to be witnesses. We realize our mistakes of reacting to the situation by reliving those events with detached awareness and pacify or nullify those hurtful memories. The thoughts will go through their natural cycle of forming, manifesting and dissolving without affecting us in a harmful way.

4. Developing Equanimity

As we begin to be introspective and stop reacting to events, we develop the ability to witness our interactions with people. We become more aware of our feelings and thoughts while events occur. This witnessing enables us to watch the preconditioning of our mind, our likes and dislikes, our ego and stops our impulsive behavior. Lord Mahavira calls this being in the state of "Equanimity." The wonderful fruit of being aware all the time is the halting of new karmic bondage. It starts carving the path of liberation. Past karmas come to fruition and shed off. We feel peaceful even among the external chaos.

With increased awareness of our behavior, even daily chores such as eating, walking, waiting in line at the grocery store become meditative. The biggest benefit of such a state is that a doorway of perception opens. We begin to know ourselves better, learn to let go of the past and future and stay in the present moment. We start to gravitate towards nature, and its stunning beauty becomes more apparent. We find joy in simpler things and don't get bored as easily.

5. Practicing savikalp dhyān

Advances in inner growth and understanding come with the practice of meditation (dhyān) that Lord Mahavir and other Tirthankars gifted us several thousand years ago. In savikalp dhyān, it is important to let the thoughts dissipate so that deeper realizations may surface. The way to practice this is to not eliminate or suppress the thoughts but just acknowledge them with a detached perception. Imagine that you are the sky and thoughts are like clouds. Just watch the clouds passing by. Mere witnessing releases the energy trapped in it by past conditioning. It loses its momentum, slows down and starts thinning out. This creates a space in which the positive affirmation will be very effective to reprogram the mind and its habitual tendencies. With the detached awareness of thoughts, we will be able to separate the external objects from the inner self. The reactive passion will simply dissolve or dissipate in the next few moments or so. This practice reinforces the focus of our attention inward. In the beginning, this practice will require more effort and awareness of our objective. Slowly, the practice will transform habitual tendencies into a thoughtful meditative mindset.



(Image by Elisa Riva from pixabay.com)

This conscious inner self-awareness helps us let go of any conflict and/or barrier within the subconscious mind and enables us to be more receptive to abundant conscious energy. It increases our state of harmony and inner balance. The inner growth takes the quantum jump. The spiritual aspect of inner growth increases considerably and shields us from the evil nature of material wealth. As we deepen our inner awareness, we start experiencing happiness in the moment and do not wait for a better future.

6. Developing love and compassion from within

As we progress in our process of inner growth, our attachment to material wealth reduces. We move away from the desire of getting things for ourselves and become more interested in giving to others. In the beginning, we may want to serve others because we expect some form of recognition or because it makes us feel good about ourselves. The recognition and 'feeling good' may have a lot of merit and propel us to do many good things in the world. We can continue to give from the level of ego. However, it constricts our full spiritual growth because we have doer-ship in our giving. When this happens, it may undo years of giving and service.

Instead, we should give from the level of unconditional love and compassion without any concern or desire for recognition or reward. Then only our giving and selfless service will be in harmony with our inner spiritual dimension. Transformation takes place from 'what is in it for me?' into 'how can I serve?' As inner growth advances, love and compassion naturally flow from within and make the 'giving' more joyful and blissful.

7. Developing oneness with the world

As we develop love and compassion from within, we get closer to other human beings and realize the commonality between us. We all want happiness. We have the same dreams. We suffer from the same passions. This feeling of oneness with the rest of humanity makes us more loving, connected, compassionate, tolerant, empathetic and understanding of all people. The peace and happiness we feel makes it easier for us to internalize, go deeper into meditation and get closer to experiencing who we really are – a pure, powerful, blissful soul !

Summary of benefits from Inner Growth

- Inner growth is a transformation from human being to spiritual being. The awareness that we are more than just physical beings with emotions and mind, sets the stage for self-realization.
- The focus on our formless dimension ennobles, elevates and expands the experience of living. The material forces such as aggression, greed and selfish pursuit turn into spiritual energies such as wisdom, love, compassion, forgiveness, and the desire to serve others.
- We learn to practice experiential living in the present moment beyond concepts, intellects or emotion. Our ego starts to dissolve and is eventually eradicated.
- Inner growth leads to detachment from our form identity and moves us closer to our true self. It is a beautiful combination of innocence and awareness. It gradually transcends life and death, and allows us to achieve complete freedom.
- Inner growth enables us to work through our personalities to serve the world with love and compassion without hampering our spiritual growth. It makes it possible for us to lead ordinary lives with families and careers, but shifts our focus from money, status, and security, to a desire to assist others. Our commitment to make a difference to others and the world fills our lives with joy and love.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

How to Improve Your Meditation Practice

By Dilip Parekh



(This article is based on a course offered in the “InsightTimer” app by Michelle DuVal, Director of The Mindful Center; www.mindfulcenter.com)

Most of us start our meditation practice for better mental and physical health. We learn to relax our body, watch our breath and reach a certain level of peace. But then we seem to get stuck and not make much progress towards achieving a more blissful state. Let us explore the obstacles we face and discuss a few proven solutions.

1) Use your stream of thoughts to practice stabilizing the mind

People think that meditation is about emptying their mind, not have any thoughts, etc. For most people, thoughts rise in the mind every few seconds and that is considered a hindrance to meditation. This is incorrect. We need to learn to skillfully work with our mind and relate to our thoughts.

What are we doing in meditation? Michelle DuVal, Director of The Mindful Center, says “Meditation is developing the ability to more skillfully use our mind to create benefit to both ourselves and the world around us. It is a form of mental development. It is developing the ability to stabilize the mind and not let it wander off and stay wandered off into thoughts.” The wandering off in thoughts causes unnecessary stress. We keep thinking about negative instances in our life over and over again. This affects our body as well.

To deal with this, most of us try not to have negative thoughts by keeping busy, eating, drinking alcohol, smoking, etc. This is because we do not know how to stabilize our mind in a skillful way. In different types of meditations, people try to focus their minds on different things. In mindfulness, people practice focusing on the present moment experience. In Transcendental Meditation, a mantra is used to focus the mind, and in Buddhist meditation people focus on virtuous objects. All these practices are for mental stabilization.

When we need to increase physical stability, we need to put our bodies in a situation where we may lose our balance so that the body will have to work to reclaim the stability. That is how we increase our physical stability. The same concept applies to meditation. When thoughts pull us out of our mental stability, it is actually helpful to us because we need to do something in our mind to reclaim our mental poise. That is how we develop our capacity to maintain mental stability. Hence, we need to realize that thoughts are not a hindrance, but rather a tool that we can work with during our meditation.

Dr. Tara Brach, founder of the Insight Meditation Community of Washington, D.C. says, “Our mind creates thoughts just like our stomach secretes enzymes.” We just need to accept the fact that creating thoughts is what the mind does. They are part of what you are practicing with. Here is how to deal with them. You notice the thoughts and then let them go.

Do not get entangled with them. The best way to practice this is notice that the thinking is happening and then move back to the object of the meditation. We need to change our relationship with thoughts.

2) Move your awareness from head to heart

In today's technologically advanced information age, most of our time is spent in intellectual pursuit. Hence we are always in thinking mode. We are either analyzing the past or engrossed in planning the future and do not pay much attention to the present moment. When we sit down for meditation practice, we are still in thinking mode. Although we are not trying to stop thoughts when we meditate, we need to make sure that we do not just sit there and continue contemplating. Contemplation is not the same thing as meditation. Meditation is moving our awareness from the head to the heart – from the conceptual realm to the experiential realm. For example, there is a concept of compassion that you can understand, discuss and write a thesis about, which is the realm of the head. But to be compassionate, to feel other people's pain, is the subject of the heart.

To experience anything, we need to feel it. Meditation is about experiencing the present moment. Hence, we need to learn how to move our awareness from head to heart. This is an important step we need to take as we begin our practice. This can be achieved just by moving our attention to the heart. One can also practice focusing on the heart chakra. There are many techniques available on Internet. Here are a couple of links you can explore:

<https://transformingourselves.com/moving-from-head-to-heart-towards-a-new-consciousness/>
<https://artoflivingretreatcenter.org/blog/meditation-how-to-shift-from-head-to-heart/>

3) Bring consistency to your meditation practice

Finding time to meditate on a daily basis is hard for many people. But time is not the issue; priority is. Why is consistency so critical to deepening a meditation practice?

1. Scientific Perspective: "Neurons that fire together begin to wire together." In order to achieve any skill we need to practice. The more consistently we practice meditation, the more the brain gets the signal that we actually want to get good at generating the meditative state. The brain will then start to wire together the neurons to make that happen with greater ease.
2. Spiritual Perspective: By being consistent, we create familiarity which pulls us back into practice. This familiarizes our mind with a peaceful mental state. This peaceful state then starts feeling like 'who we are' instead of 'something we just do.'

How to be consistent? Always schedule a daily practice; preferably at the same time everyday. Treat it like an appointment. If the amount of time is a problem, remember that some meditation is better than nothing; even 10 minutes is fine. When you notice that you are talking yourself out of doing the meditation, take a deep breath and stabilize your mind on that breath. Do that for about 10 seconds.

4) Learn to deal with external distractions

When we sit down to practice meditation, we may experience two types of distractions – External and Internal. The external distractions are environmental - various sounds and visuals, the aches and pains in the body, etc. The internal distractions are related to things going on in the mind - thoughts, memories of the past, worries about future, day-dreaming, etc.

When an external distraction occurs such as a sound, our mind goes towards that sound which takes us away from the meditation. What most people do is to ignore that sound. But that means we are still treating the sound as if it was a problem. If we take a closer look, we will find that such sounds are part of what is rising in the present.

What we need to do is shift our focus to the sound, be a witness to the sound. Don't ignore it or wish it would go away. Bring the sound into the field of your practice. Be aware of that sound without labeling it as noise or melodious, without any like or dislike. Do not fight with whatever is rising for you in the moment. If the body reacts to the sound in a certain way, bring that in the field of your practice. The 'distraction' then disappears even though the sound is still there because the mind was calling it a distraction. You can then shift back to the meditation. The same is true for all other bodily distractions as well, unless you are experiencing chronic pain.

5) Learn to let go of thoughts the right way

From childhood, we are told to hold on to things; not to let things go. Hold on to your lunch box, hold on to your friends, money, job, reputation. But to be happy we have to let things go. How does letting go function in the mind?

Most people begin meditation for relaxation. Relaxation is letting go at physical level – letting go of the tension we are holding in our muscles. At the mental level, we “hold on” to our worries and anxious thoughts, which generates more of them, thus creating more stress. We have to learn to let these thoughts go as well if we want to experience deeper relaxation. Since the body goes where the mind goes, with a relaxed mind, our body relaxes as well.

The mind can't be at two places at once. Since thoughts occur at a very fast pace, it feels like we have many thoughts at the same time. In fact, the mind cannot hold more than one primary object of attention or awareness simultaneously. In practice of mindfulness, we move the mind in the present which opens up a space between our thoughts. This is how letting go functions. Usually when we just let things go, we try not to think about it or try to distract ourselves by keeping busy. This is resistance. But the nature of mind is such that whatever we resist tends to persist. Hence in the context of meditative practice, we shouldn't focus much on “Letting Go.” Instead we should focus on the moving the mind into the present. And because the mind can't be in two places at the same time, the letting go happens automatically. You can practice this by periodically stopping whatever you are doing and focusing on the breath. Just inhale and exhale a few times with full focus on the breath.

One thing to note is that just because you were able to let go once does not mean that the same thought will not come again. So the practice is to keep letting go over and over again, and keep coming back to the object of our meditation. *The purpose is not to get rid of those thoughts; the purpose of our meditation is to deepen our ability to let go.* The way to do that is to allow the thoughts to appear and then let go, let go and let go; which over time, with consistent practice, will allow us to deepen our meditation and increase the happiness in our lives.

6) Stay alert



A fundamental hallmark of meditation is a high level of mental brightness, alertness, focus and poise. But often people experience that their mental state during meditation is unfocused, sluggish and sleepy. Although it can feel very relaxing and give you an impression that your meditation was good, it is not so. Michelle DuVal calls this as “sinking mind”; Eckhart Tolle says that this is “going below thought”. A drowsy and sluggish state prohibits the meditative mind.

To deepen our meditative practice, we have to follow a discipline of pulling ourselves out of the sinking mind and transcend above thought. The way to deal with this is to set our intention to pull ourselves out of such state at the beginning of meditation. We can do this through our posture.

When we notice that the mind is sinking, we can open our eyes, which is a change in our posture. You can also straighten your back and neck. During meditation we need to be in a state of relaxed alertness. If we get into a sinking mind state that would mean we got the relaxation part, but not the alertness part. Adjust your body's posture to increase the alertness and go back to the meditation. You may have to do this multiple times.

7) Take a leadership role in guiding your mind

Our mind is mostly involved in negative thinking - either rehashing the past or worrying about the future. There are two main reasons for this:

- a) Our brain is wired for survival and keeps a careful eye on problems in our life. In a typical day even if 10 good things have happened and only one thing has gone wrong, our brain tends to focus on that one thing in order to solve the problem and help us survive. This happens when we are not super engaged in what is happening at the current moment. Our brain is not wired for happiness!

- b) Most of us let our mind go wherever it wants. If we start our day with good thoughts, we tend to have a good day and if we start the day with negative thoughts, our day tends not to be so good.

That is where meditation is useful. It is the practice of taking more of a leadership role with our mind. We can move our minds from things that are not beneficial to us to places we decide are beneficial. This allows us to achieve our objectives. Everyone wants to suffer less and be happy. To do this, we need to understand when our brain goes into negativity and become more aware of what we are thinking about. To do that as a meditative practice, we need to be mindful and be in the present. Pay attention to what is surrounding us; be aware of our breath, the energy flow in the body. Practicing gratitude for the good things in our life also breaks the cycle of our negative thinking.

8) Manage your emotions

Just like we need to learn to manage our thoughts, we also need to manage our emotions during meditation. These emotions can be simple such as getting bored or difficult ones related to memories of past events coming to surface.

Let us look at a simple example and how to handle it. Most of us start our meditation practice by focusing on the breath. In this state we are paying attention to the body's natural process of inhaling and exhaling. While watching the breath we may feel relaxed or we may feel bored. Such thoughts create either positive or negative sensations in the body, which trigger emotional response. If the sensation is positive, we crave for more and if it is negative, we want to get out of the situation. To handle such emotions, most people try to switch the negative to positive. A better approach is to notice the positive or negative sensations in the body and just be with them. Don't do anything; just sit there.

Start this practice with small incidences. When you feel that focusing on breath during meditation is boring, just stay with that feeling; don't act on it. Try to see where you feel this negative sensation in the body. What is it doing to the pace of the breathing, to the heart rate? Learn to not let the negative sensations erode the quality of your meditation.

At times you may experience that some emotions come up during meditation which are difficult to manage. Often these are some of our unpleasant experiences from the past. Instead of struggling with them and wishing that they go away, ask yourself, "What would I most want someone to say to me at this point? What do I most want to hear? What would feel loving and reassuring?" Next, offer yourself what you most want to hear. Put your hand on your heart and be there for yourself.

9) Practice informal mini-meditations throughout the day

Formal meditation is when we sit in our meditation posture at a specific time, in a specific place. Informal practice is how to bring our meditative mind of calm, concentration and mental stability that we cultivate in our meditation, out with us when dealing with stress in our daily life. That is the most important time to practice our meditation. This is also called 'mini meditation'. Start these practices with smaller challenges.

There can be many opportunities to practice mini meditations, such as long lines at the grocery store, flight delays at the airport. In these situations, observe your thoughts. Are you getting upset about the delay? Are you blaming the person at the cash register for being slow or the airlines for not being on time? Practice being in the present and observe your surroundings. You can also practice mindfulness while doing routine chores like washing dishes or doing laundry. This will prepare you for dealing with stress in more and more challenging experiences.

I hope these guidelines will help you to achieve a more blissful state in your meditation practice.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

Anekāntavād Speaks - hEARt Listens

By Sheily Shah



Sheily Shah is a graduate of the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor in Computer Science with a minor in Creative Writing. She has been an active member of JSJD for most of her life, and helped lead the JOY board from 2011 - 2015. She served as a president of JOY from 2013 – 2015, starting initiatives like Teacher's Appreciation Day and Jain College Panel. At her university, she helps run the Jain Students Association, and has been active in YJA as a member of multiple project teams, a Local Representative and participant in initiatives such as Jains In Action. She credits JSJD in helping her build a foundation of values that have shaped her day-to-day life and in connecting to her roots.

(This article was originally published on YJA Blog in February 2020)

If I had to come up with a buzzword to describe Jainism, I would undoubtedly choose *Anekāntavād*. I remember being introduced to *Anekāntavād* when I was about nine or ten years old, and my Pathshala (religious school) teacher assigned us homework to write five good things and five bad things that happened to us at the end of each day for one week.

During Pathshala the following week, we shared what happened, and my teacher brought up *Anekāntavād* — the multiplicity of viewpoints. She said that everyone seems to do similar things, such as go to school, extracurricular classes, and play on the playground, but the best or worst part of everyone's day is motivated by different interests. While I talked about recess being my favorite, someone else described it as the worst part of their day because they would rather play inside.

Ten years later, I found college to be a playground of its own. Everyone around me seemed to go through similar challenges — academics, building friendships and adjusting to the campus. However, as I built more connections on campus, I realized that every person's story was very different. I remember watching my friends take on the many stressed college students face. From trying to find a job or handling a relationship to deeper struggles of depression and substance abuse, everyone had a different story and a different way of coping with it.

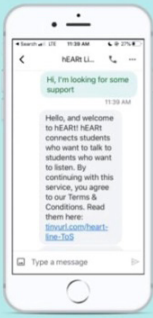
While my roommates and I had a strong support system coming into college, we realized that many other students come onto campus feeling alone while they adapt to their new lives. There were countless mental health resources on campus, ranging from CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) to support groups to new apps. Whether they were unaware of or confused by these amenities, or simply did not have the time to utilize them, students had a difficult time gaining access to these resources.

After a year of assessing the needs of students campus-wide, we found that students prefer to talk to their peers the most — students who have gone through similar struggles. However, through our research, we also discovered that students sometimes felt this was a burden, or that they were being judged during these conversations.

We also realized that students, including ourselves, didn't know how to properly support others in the face of mental health challenges. We have a tendency to overlook the "empathy" part and skip straight to the "giving advice" part. But most of the time, what might work for one person doesn't work for another.

From these two needs, we developed a peer-to-peer chat application "**hEARt Listens**" that allows students who want to talk with other students who are trained to listen. Our product consists of an anonymous messaging application where students can simply text in and be connected to a trained peer supporter. We developed a 10-week training program with the help of the *University of Michigan School of Social Work* and *School of Education*, as well as mental health organizations on and off-campus. Through the program, we are able to train students who are genuinely interested in learning how to support their peers. The training program includes topics, such as active listening over text, motivational interviewing, how to navigate a difficult conversation, and how to smartly refer someone who may be in crisis to an external resource.

the hEARt Line: promoting positive mental health through peer support



- chat anonymously with a trained peer supporter
- access guidance on navigating the complex resource ecosystem at the University of Michigan
- connect with crisis services

Need to talk? Just text HEART to 734-292-8006.

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I truly believe that seeing “hEARt Listens” come alive has created a full circle in my personal life. After that weeklong reflection exercise on *Anekāntavād* in my Pathshala study class, I found myself making it a habit to reflect on my day before going to bed. I would think about the people I interacted with and the things I learned. And every night, I was in awe of the countless stories and realities that can exist in one space.

But while I understood the idea of *Anekāntavād* and attempted to observe it, I didn’t realize what I was supposed to do about it. Along with these reflections every night, I would also think “so what?”

hEARt Listens made me realize that, while it’s one thing to know that multiple perspectives exist, what can bridge gaps between those views is empathy. We are taught about empathy, sympathy, and compassion as a package deal, under the umbrella of “being nice.” We are taught to donate, volunteer, and serve those who might be underprivileged. Sometimes those actions can unknowingly drive the connection away and create wider gaps. The conversation can easily become more about you than the person you’re trying to help. Empathy is being able to listen to someone’s story and trying to level with their thoughts. Empathy is not “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes;” rather, it’s admitting you don’t know what a situation is like from someone else’s end but can listen without judgment to help them figure out a positive action on their own.

We started this initiative three years ago and are currently training our second cohort of supporters. We recently made a *hEARt Listens* line available to students at the University of Michigan and are close to launching our mobile application prototype. Additionally, we’ve been honored to receive multiple grants and win pitch competitions across campus to help fund and support our organization. While we’ve just started accepting conversations on the actual line, I have had several conversations where I saw myself and the people around me engaging in empathetic listening.

hEARt Listens is an attempt to give people a platform to feel understood. At the end of the day, *Anekāntavād* is constantly *speaking* by showing us a new perspective every time we interact with someone; but it’s our job to *listen* and, more importantly, take action.



hEARt Listens is co-founded by Aastha Dharia, Aria Thakore, Sheily Shah and Swathi Sampath. Our mission is to provide an empathetic ear for students everywhere. If you’re interested in us, please reach out @heartlistens (Instagram) or hEARt Listens (Facebook). Feel free to shoot me an email at shahhs@umich.edu to learn more.

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

The Unchained Jain

By Sahil Kothari



Sahil Kothari believes that if we each choose a job that we love, we will never have to actually “work” a day in our lives. Outside of his current profession, Sahil enjoys volleyball, skiing, hiking, and studying philosophy. He was born and raised in a Jain household and continues to explore his spirituality through meditation, workshops, and deep conversations with “interesting people.” Sahil graduated from New York University with a degree in Marketing & International Business, however, he is truly a life-long learner where he continues to take classes on unique topics that fit his wide range of interests such as laughing yoga, story-telling, and innovation to name a few! Sahil currently resides in New York. Although he will always be an “east-coaster” at heart, he has dreams to one day experience life in California and visit outer space.

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

*Mental chains,
May block spiritual gains,
Or lead you on a life — that’s both plain and mundane.*

*Personal progress may be restrained,
Exponential growth might not be attained.*

*For bright sunshine, instead of clouds and rain,
Work towards becoming, an ‘Un-chained Jain.’*

*Above words just came to my brain,
If they sound insane, just give me a chance to explain.
Ok! Got the attempted poetry out of my system...so let’s begin.*

I was born “Jain”, raised “Jain” and am “Jain.” One can say I’ve been “Jain” my whole life. I put the term in quotes because I personally try to avoid labeling people, beliefs or frankly anything. If change is the only constant, then any form of labeling today will be outdated tomorrow. How can we label ourselves with a singular identifier such as “Jain,” when our bodies, brain and mindsets all inevitably evolve over time?

For the purpose of this essay, let’s accept the idea of being labeled as a “Jain” and explore how this connects with one’s personal identity. While the label exists, note that there is constant evolution in regards to the connection to this label.

My name is Sahil Kothari. My parents are Jain, therefore I was born and raised as a Jain. But does this make me a Jain? What does being Jain really mean? Are there Christians who behave more “Jainly” than some “natural born Jains?” And are there times a devout Jain has moments of “un-Jain” thoughts or actions, yet continues to identify as a Jain? I believe the answer to both of these questions is paradoxically — yes.

While growing up, Jainism came off like a prisoner’s guide to life and a boring way to live. “Don’t eat onions. Don’t eat potatoes. Don’t eat after sunset. Don’t drink alcohol. Don’t resort to violence and just turn the other cheek. Don’t think negative thoughts. Don’t even think about sneezing during Pratikaman. As a child, this came off as a highly restricted way of living. Admittedly, I rebelled against so many “rules” of Jainism back then. At the same time, as directed by my parents, I visited the derasar regularly, memorized a number of Jain prayers and songs, learned all the Tirthankar names, and almost “accomplished” the ability to perform Samayik on my own. Lots of my family and friends would be so impressed by me knowing all this; but in reality, I simply memorized ancient words and blindly followed rituals without any real meaning. In reflection, I would say I was a “Chained Jain.”

To help provide definition and context, I view a “Chained Jain” as a Jain attempting to live within the strictest norms of Jainism, following all the core mandates prescribed within Jain scriptures and by our traditions. But while living this

way, the “Chained Jain” misses mental or spiritual freedom that uplifts the soul. To me, Jain laws were embedded in my mind, but my lack of experience created the perception that these led to a restricted lifestyle. Although I had an amazing childhood, my identification with Jainism felt like a liability.

I grew up in a house in New Jersey. My Ba (grandmother), who has since passed away, used to come from India and stay with us for many months at a time. I saw her always turning off the water faucet, switching off the lights and cleaning her plate after dinner squeaky clean to ensure no wastage. When I was younger, she told me to do all this, I’d sneak into the bathroom to flush down my extra milk, enjoy an extravagant hot shower letting the water run recklessly, and keep my lights on but door closed so no one knew. So clever I was!

Then when Ba went back to India, I missed her. Somehow, I started trying to do all the things she wanted me to do (plus more). My plate was clean, no food wasted, lights off whenever unused, and shorter showers. Call it missing my grandma, call it some small sliver of maturity or call it a droplet of wisdom; somehow these elements of “Jainism” started working their way into my life. My identification with Jainism at this point was more about being a good human, where my actions were determined by the litmus test: “Would Ba approve?”

During my teenage years, I began to evolve. I understood a few more things about Jainism and thought they were pretty epic. I began to appreciate that Jainism has so many beautiful qualities embedded within its core philosophies. For the first time, I felt like this liability was working itself into an asset.

As I entered the next decade, Jainism strengthened my core. I started reading and learning many things not directly focused on Jainism, yet somehow still all connected. Self-help books taught me about the power of positive thinking, mirroring Jain theory’s assertion that “thought equals action.” I became very interested in making a positive impact on humanity and the world (a topic for later), and found it so ironic how today, all of my Ba’s teachings are in line with what society seems to value universally — i.e. saving the planet, reversing global warming, solving world hunger. My visionary Ba’s lifestyle choices about not wasting food, water and electricity are what world leaders today speak about in public forums — man, she was good!

Fast-forwarding to today, at the age of 34, I love many teachings of Jainism and choose to practice them in my life. I feel like an “Un-chained Jain.” This to me means personally feeling liberated from mental do’s and don’ts and putting emphasis on embracing facets of the Jain philosophy from within. It means incorporating aspects of Jainism into my life consciously and with insight, rather than blindly and simply because I was taught and told to do so. The restrictive lifestyle bound by the rules that I once self-imposed are now interpreted as “a beautiful way of being.” I currently mesh Jain principles with ideas from spirituality, science and the mystic cosmos. As a result of these hybrid interpretations, I feel extremely self-aware and content in my element.

My goal in life today is actually very simple. I want to be a good human being and use the power of compounding to make the world a better place. With this simple theory around the power of compounding, Warren Buffet has become the richest man in the world. Imagine if we all applied this theory to Do Good: how much could we collectively multiply and change the game of humanity towards positivity? If every person in the world guided one other person towards being a better human, if every reader of this article helped one other person to do a good deed tomorrow, the impact would be exponential! The core of Jainism is all about goodness. I am certain that Mahavir Swami will high-five you in Moksha if you took an active part in spreading the love.

I’ll conclude by clarifying that I don’t mean to negatively put down anyone that is Jain and follows strict rules and rituals. I believe it takes high amounts of discipline to do this, and I respect this very much. My only purpose to separate the two was in regards to my own personal evolution. Whatever mental chains there are in your life, work towards breaking these and feel the beauty of liberation!

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

Conversation with Dr. Parveen Jain

Author of “An Introduction to Jain Philosophy”

Moderated by: Ms. Pratiti Jain and Mr. Rijul Jain

Ms. Pratiti Jain, raised in the Bay Area, previously served as a member of the executive committee at Jain Center of Northern California, a dedicated past pathshala teacher, and a volunteer. Pratiti works for a primary health care company and lives in the East Bay with her husband and 13-year-old son.

Mr. Rijul Jain is a high school student and a California native who serves as part of the executive team for the Future Jain Leadership Program under Jain International Trade Organization, San Francisco Chapter. He is interested in Jain ethics and is looking to study philosophy and computer science in college

It is our honor to present **Dr. Parveen Jain, Ph.D.**, a longtime leader in the vibrant Jain community in the San Francisco Bay Area. He led the team to build the Jain Temple of San Francisco Bay Area and is deeply involved with the growth of Siddhachalam in New Jersey. He is very passionate about promoting the message of nonviolence and is enthusiastic about creating educational platforms for the dissemination of dharmic doctrines, especially the Jain doctrine; and applying Jain principles and scriptures to everyday practice for the growing global Jain community and beyond, for current and future generations. As a prolific entrepreneur and as a leader in numerous Silicon Valley tech companies, he has several patents, published papers, and awards for his philanthropic and professional endeavors.

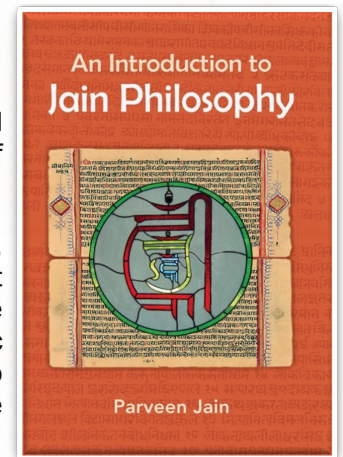


Recently his book “An Introduction to Jain Philosophy” was released. He has received endorsements and very positive reviews from readers of all ages since its publication. These readers consist of scholar-practitioners, the academic community at large, spiritualists who had heard about Jain dharma but did not have access to such a text, and many Jains and non-Jains who are interested in learning about Jain philosophy. We spoke to him about the book and here is an excerpt of our discussion with him.

What or who inspired you to write this book, and what audience is the book intended?

I am very fortunate to have had a very close Guru-disciple relationship with Acharya Sushil Kumar (Guru-Ji). His teachings and blessings, and my reverence to him were the channels of my inspiration to take up this project.

The motivation came from my children and other young Jains raised and living in North America, many of whom for years have been expressing the need for a book that presents our vibrant Jain philosophy in an easy-to-understand style. There has been a need of books that are comprehensive yet easy-to-read, that are focused on the core philosophy and not on ritualistic practices, and are a non-sectarian treatise for the western readers. This need motivated me to initiate this project in 2014. I started to write for young Jains, but it is gratifying to note that the book has appealed to much broader audiences.



How is this book organized, and what makes it different from other existing literature on Jainism?

An Introduction to Jain Philosophy presents a comprehensive overview of the critical elements of Jain philosophy in a single volume. The book also includes some aspects of our history and culture and a discussion on science and art behind Jain mantras.

The organization of this book not only allows the reader to engage in an overview of the central teachings of the Jain tradition; but also to ascertain the profundity of its depths. It can be read with equal efficacy in succession from beginning to end, or pursued by specific topics of interest to the reader. Either strategy will have the same effect: a systematic understanding of what the timeless teachings of Jain thinkers have to say about the universal issues of the human condition and how we might understand our harmonious relationship with other living entities.

How does this book guide us to apply Jain principles/ethics in our day-to-day corporate lives or the academic world?

Jain philosophy is the greatest gift from Lord Mahavira to humanity. Jain dharma is so profound that a good understanding of our philosophy would automatically influence an individual towards righteous living. The book explains the concepts in relatively simple terms without losing the rigor behind those concepts. Once we grasp the reasoning behind various fundamental concepts, it does not take much persuasion to adopt those principles in day-to-day life. For instance, in chapter 11, we discuss karma theory and implications of careless living on the soul's spiritual progression. In the next chapter, we discuss and illustrate aspects of the honorable householder life style that result in the accumulation of minimum inauspicious karma and maximum auspicious karma. The Appendix on Mantras, with discussion on the art and science behind the mantras, would inspire the readers to recite those more often. We have followed this style while describing every concept presented in the book. I have personally noticed early-stage transformations in some individuals who have read the book.

What did you learn from the experience of writing this book?

My most significant learning was the realization of the vastness and depth of Lord Mahavira's teachings, and his eternal impression on every aspect of living existence. His teachings are universal, all-encompassing and everlasting. What he expounded millennia ago is as applicable to humanity today as it was then. His elucidations constitute the only spiritual philosophy that clearly shows parallels between dharma and science—each on a pursuit to unveil the understanding of the fundamental truth— and how they overlap each other. The critical exception is that science is still discovering what Lord Mahavira revealed centuries ago.

The process of writing this book firmly reinforced my belief that being born as a Jain is a monumental blessing in itself, and I do not want to squander away this opportunity. As much as I want to live like a true Jain, even more important is to make my fellow Jains realize how fortunate we all are, and make non-Jains around us aware of the greatness of our dharma. This book is my step in that direction.

What do you hope your readers will take away from this book? Any final thoughts?

As you know, I am an engineer and entrepreneur, which was both an advantage and a disadvantage in writing this book – advantage because I could write for a layperson from a layperson's perspective, and disadvantage because I had to do much personal research and reading to transcribe the principles. Fortunately, I have a score of Guru Ji's books, writings, recordings, and personal notes of conversations with him. All of that, along with discussions with many other scholars, became the basis of my manuscript. The bulk of my work was to translate materials from the original languages to English.

It took me five years of full-time effort after my retirement in February 2014, but I am truly gratified that the book is well received. I sincerely hope that the readers enjoy the book and learn anew or reinforce their understanding of our profound philosophy elucidated so eloquently by Lord Mahavir. Hopefully, both early-stage and advanced readers with Jain or non-Jain backgrounds find it informative.

It is a purely philanthropic venture for me. My sole objective of this endeavor has been to spread the wisdom of Jain dharma that the world needs so badly. To that end, I request all Jains to promote the principle of Jain dharma, through this book or by any other means.

Finally, I want to point out that my contribution to this effort is limited primarily to that of a translator. The actual material came from Guru Ji's writings and my conversations with him, for which I am forever indebted to him.

We would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Parveen for sharing his experience and journey about this book. It serves as an inspiration to everyone who wants to learn more about the Jain religion, especially our current and future younger generations. The book enables the reader to enjoy a comprehensive journey into the intricate world of Jain thought in a way that is philosophical in its compelling rationality, deeply spiritual in its revelations, yet accessible in its language. This approach, presentation, style, and composition make this book a unique treatise on Jain dharma.

The book is available in printed and kindle versions on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com). For more information, please visit www.parveenjain.com. Congratulations and Jai Jinendra!

To provide your comments about this article please go to <https://tinyurl.com/JainDigest-June-2020>

Call to Jain Youth in North America

Essay Contest hosted by Shri VRG Committee



Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi (VRG) Memorial Committee is pleased to announce an essay contest for Jain youth in the USA and Canada. In an effort to engage & inspire the youth, the committee has chosen a very interesting topic:

“Jainism in the Western World – The Beginning, Progress and the Future.

My commitment to take it forward towards the 22nd Century.”

We hope the students across North America will take time to broaden their writing skills during the summer break and participate in this contest.

The contest is open to Jain youth ages 14-29 years.

Prizes for the winning entries are: \$250 (1st place), \$150 (2nd place), \$100 (3rd place)

The deadline for submission is Sept. 30, 2020.

We request all Pathsala teachers to encourage students in your centers to participate and shine across North American Jain Community!!

For more Information, application packet and rules of the contest please contact:

Kamlesh Shah, Chairman VRG Memorial Committee at VRGCommittee@JAINA.Org

Call for Articles for Jain Digest

Together, we can all continue to make **Jain Digest** a wonderful learning experience for ourselves! Now that you have seen the diverse content of this magazine, is the writer, thinker in you motivated?

- Have you come across a person or an organization that is providing compassionate selfless service to others?
- Do you know a Stavan that wells up your eyes? Do you want to share it with others?
- Would you like to explain an aspect of Jain philosophy that challenges and engages you?
- Have you heard any inspirational stories that motivate you to do your best?
- Do you want to share your challenges and experiences in practicing Jain principles?
- Are there special things happening in your Jain Center or Pathshala you want to share?

If your answer is “YES” to any of the above questions, then don’t wait!

Contact us at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com and tell us what you want to write about. We will provide you with guidelines and any assistance you may need. We want this to be YOUR magazine! If the idea of connecting with others, with your ‘self’, and with Bhagwan appeals to you then get involved, help others, and let us enrich our lives.



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