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***Making Jainism Visible in the Digital Age ....News Letter – SEP 2015***

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## **Rajasthan High Court verdict on Santhara/Sallekhana**

Firstly, thanks to the Jain Community members who have taken lead and are driving this important activity with dedication and full force to appeal against the Rajasthan High Court verdict.

As we are preparing for the appeal against the Rajasthan High Court verdict on Santhara/Sallekhana, we may like to consider the following scenario even though we are all hoping to win in SC.

We need to create a second core team (may contain the same people) to start working on the possibility that the Supreme court may side with the Rajasthan High Court verdict or it may even give harsher verdict. An action plan is needed for this eventuality.

(Please recall the case **Bal Patil & Anr. Vs. Union of India** in Supreme Court regarding **Jain Minority Status** and activist judges going much beyond their judicial power to write many unreal and damaging things about Jainism in the verdict and these extra-Judicial observations were quite irrelevant and uncalled for.)

This Santhara/Sallekhana case is just a small part of overall war on Jainism by fanatic forces who want to destroy independent identity of Jainism and mange Jains and Jainism as subordinate to them. These forces have been working for decades (and in some aspects, for centuries) and have elaborate plans and they will continue with more court cases on different matters related to Jainism to bring more and more restrictions on Jains. We may not know how many more (such) cases are pending in different courts against Jainism or are in the planning phase in devil minds.

**It is therefore necessary that the second team starts working on getting the political solution to this and similar issues** (The same way as dedicate team of Jains worked very hard at political level to get the minority status granted at Central Government level.)

The resolution/notification may be something like this:

“At the dawn of human civilization Tirthankara Adinath / Rishabhanath taught humanity the path of self-purification (known as Jainism today). This was then re-stated by other 23 Tirthankara over the period of time, Mahaveer being the last one with his period being around 2600 years back. As Tirthankaras are omniscient (all knowing) these principle and tenets cannot be fully understood by ordinary human beings (including judges) whose knowledge is near zero (compared to omniscient) as such these principles and practices cannot be challenged in the court or restricted by any legislative actions at central or state level and Jains will have full rights and freedom to continue their religious practices as per their Doctrine (as is guaranteed by our constitution). Any

previous/current and future court ruling or legislation putting any restrictions on Jain way of life is therefore considered null and void and is not binding on Jains.”

(This is a lay man's wordings and need to be re-written by professional and legal experts)

**This type of resolution (notification) by central government will put an end to endless legal battles which we may have to otherwise fight with no guarantee of success.**

In the long term, greater understanding of the overall threat to Jainism from these fanatic forces is needed, knowing very well that these court cases are but a small part of a bigger multi prong attack that is happening on Jainism. A long term and continuous action plan by Jains and well-coordinated by a central team, is needed to tackle them. We can focus on the current issue now, but we all need to discuss the bigger picture at earliest possible moment and draw an action plan to safeguard Jainism which is under constant attack from devil minds.

Vinod

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## Kolkata rally in favour of sallekhna



\*. Gurudev Chitrabhanu (U.S. Spiritual Leader) said

Jainism traditionally known as Jaina dharma, is an Indian religion that prescribes a path of non-violence towards all living beings and emphasizes spiritual independence and equality between all forms of life. Practitioners believe that non-violence and self-control are the means by which they can obtain liberation.

\*. Devotees of Jain religion ask Indian judges for right to fast to death.

Followers of an ancient Indian religion have petitioned the country's Supreme Court for the right to starve to death as a religious freedom.

Leaders of the Jain religion have taken their campaign to the highest judicial body after the Rajasthan

state high court declared that the centuries-old ritual of santhara was illegal as it amounted to assisted suicide.

"Santhara is an integral part of the Jain religion and the court can't interfere with its customs,"

said the petition asking the Supreme Court to legalise the practice.

Thousands of Jains, who believe in a path of non-violence towards all living creatures, earlier

attended a protest in Jaipur carrying banners that proclaimed: "Suicide is crime. Santhara is religion."

\*.Silent march by Jains against Rajasthan HC order on 'Santhara' in Madhya Pradesh

The local Jain community on Monday took out a silent march against the Rajasthan High Court's decision

for holding Jainism religious ritual of 'Santhara' (fast unto death) as illegal.

A silent march held by the 'Sakal Jain Samaj' in Betul urged that the court should reconsider its decision on the issue.

The march started from Jain Snathak in Kothi Bazar area and after passing through various streets of the city, culminated at Amjhira Parshavnath Mandir in Betuj Ganj area.

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\* Jain Muni Pramansagar ji Maharaj disciple of Acharya Vidyasagar ji Maharaj would discourse on Ramayana

and Geeta at the local Zila school ground from November 7 to 11. The four day programme being organised

by Vishwa Dharma Jagaran Manch is expected to garner huge crowd in wake of the popularity that Maharaj has gained while giving similar discourse in other cities of the country.

\*.From BBC Should India's Jains be given the choice to die?

You have to understand that for us death is full of excitement. You embrace sallekhana not out of despair

with your old life, but to gain and attain something new. It's just as exciting as visiting a new

landscape or a new country: we feel excited at a new life, full of possibilities," a Jain woman monk

tells writer William Dalrymple in his book Nine Lives. Jainism is one of the world's most ancient

religions, and Jain monks lead a life of extreme austerity and renunciation. Sallekhana or santhara is a

controversial religious practice in which a Jain stops eating with the intention of preparing for death.

It is seen as the ultimate way to expunge all sins and karma, liberating the soul from the cycle of

birth, death and rebirth.

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The Jain World Team

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