



VEERAYATAN
compassion in action

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017



Veerayatan celebrations

Kutch, Palitana and Rajgir



Acharya Shriji's Birthday celebrations

26 January, a special day being the date of India's Republic day, is made even more special as it is Acharya Shriji's birthday. Acharya Shriji's 81st birthday was celebrated in the spectacular surroundings of the Veerayatan Kutch complex. A gathering from as far afield as the USA, United Kingdom, Kenya, Dubai, Muscat, Malaysia and all parts of India, were in Kutch and Palitana to be in the presence of Acharya Shriji and to share in the wisdom and love she imparted - truly special moments for all present!



Acharya Shriji's Eternal Message of Global Friendship

Acharya Shriji gave a fitting message to the international gathering that all efforts must be made to cultivate and develop global friendship networks so that people all over the world can not only call upon each other for personal support, help or information when required, but also just as importantly, foster better friendships with like-minded people. Veerayatan, as a global organisation, with active members worldwide, is especially well positioned to develop this. Acharya Shriji's call for action is for such a network of contacts to be formed and to be up and running quickly in each country and internationally.

To form part of this initiative please register your interest and provide your contact details by going to: <https://goo.gl/tQQKzn>



Morari Bapu's tribute to Acharya Shriji

Morari Bapu, a spiritual leader who needs no introduction, specially attended Acharya Shriji's birthday celebrations. He spoke eloquently about Acharya Shriji and said, in particular, that he looks upon Acharya Shriji as his 'mother' and himself as her 'son'. He was very excited to share this mother-son relationship which had been forged last year during his stay in Veerayatan Rajgir during Ram katha. He depicted this mother-son relationship in such a warm manner that all in the audience were touched and overwhelmed. He also commented that he greatly admired the smile and happiness with which Acharya Shriji and all the Sadhvijis of Veerayatan carried out their work. He saluted Acharya Shriji and all the Sadhvijis for all that has been achieved in Kutch. He considered the gift of the shawl presented to him by Acharya Shriji as a protective shield which he will treasure.

To listen to the full speech, go to: <https://youtu.be/xtWyBHkx3fl>



Samosaran – The World of Harmony – Bhoomi Poojan

The bhoomi poojan of the 'Samosaran' took place at Veerayatan Kutch on 26 January 2017 with the aim of opening in 2020. 'Samosaran – The World of Harmony' will unfold for the first time ever the spiritual journey embodied in and expounded by our revered Tirthankars in a most interesting, unique and captivating way. This breathtaking, educational and enlightening display will transport the audience back in time as if they were in the 'real' Samosaran.

KUTCH 15 YEARS CELEBRATIONS

Acharya Shriji's birthday formed one aspect of the joyous celebrations which took place over a 3-day period to applaud the enormous achievements of Veerayatan in the region of Kutch, Gujarat following the 2001 earthquake, all largely as a result of the dedication and tireless work of Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji with the blessings of Acharya Shriji.

Limitless compassion was the reason why Acharya Shriji had, without hesitation, immediately rushed to this devastated area when the earthquake struck to initiate relief and rehabilitation work. And out of the despair, destruction and chaos which she saw around her, there sprang hope, order and determination as a result of the hugs and helping hands, respect for all lives and the prayers which the Sadhvis were able to offer.

This was back in 2001, just over 15 years ago. It is incredible how much has been established since then, in such a short time! Today the lotus flower of Veerayatan Kutch is in full bloom, showering the gift of education on the entire Kutch region, combined seamlessly with the practice of Mahavir Bhagwan's timeless values.

Built with deep love, compassion and endless energy lives, young to old, are being transformed each and every day. Always using a professional approach, by inculcating moral and spiritual values, Veerayatan has truly created a revolution in the educational field in Kutch, with thriving primary and secondary educational centres, vocational training centres and higher educational centres all available for the people of Kutch.

To see more of the colourful celebrations, go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlvTI6nCuMc>





The Cultural Programme

The highlight of the Kutch Celebrations was undoubtedly the vibrant and thought provoking cultural programme put on by the students of Veerayatan Kutch. Plays and dances (with colourful and distinctive costumes) by the students of Veerayatan using lyrics composed by Pujya Gurudev Upadhyaya Shri Amar Muniji Maharaj were interspersed with and heightened the powerful messages which came out in the cultural programme. Through a powerful narrative written by Sadhvi Shri Shilapiji the audience were able to see the contribution of various Acharyas in Jain history who had broken from the path of tradition, culminating in the ground breaking work undertaken by Upadhyaya Amar Muniji Maharaj and Acharya Shriji.

The Beautiful School at Rudrani and the Fun Packed Mela

Rudrani Veerayatan Vidyapeeth, a beautiful school with a serene atmosphere surrounded by hundreds of mango, 'bor' and 'chikoo' trees with a small stream running through the school and classrooms designed in the shape of huts. To witness this would surely make you wish you were young once again - definitely an amazing school no one can resist, infused with charm, goodness and spirituality!

The fun packed Mela organised for the children, their families and the guests added to the vibrancy of the School. Everything was so colourful and well decorated. Young and older children (dressed in traditional Kutchi attire) running around wondering which stall they should go to and play some games at - whether to head towards the long queue for the game where they had to pick a duck from the pond using a rod and place it in a container or perhaps go to the lucky dip stand where there was definitely a guaranteed prize to be won which would raise a smile! Witnessing the excitement and wonder within the children who were experiencing such festivities for the first time brought sheer joy to the hearts of all the visitors, so much so that one visitor from the USA was moved to tears.

There were a number of stalls where specialist Kutchi items were being sold, which was popular amongst the visitors. And no mela would be complete without food! A range of delicious snacks including pizzas was available for all to replenish everyone's energy levels.

The icing on the cake was seeing the children performing in the cultural programme with proud parents standing upright and thinking how fortunate they are to have a school like Rudrani! "Jai Veerayatan and thank you Acharya Shriji and all the Sadhvi Sangha for all your contributions to this world and all its souls!"



PALITANA CELEBRATIONS

Acharya Shriji has a vision of opening much needed schools in the Jain tirth kshetras or places of pilgrimage. And the foremost tirth kshetra is of course Palitana and it is there that the celebrations continued with two significant events taking place on 28 January 2017.

The primary school, Tirthankar Mahavir Vidya Mandir, was inaugurated on 28 January 2017. The aim is to start the school in June 2017 with 5 classes running (Standard 1-5) with around 150 - 200 children from the doliwalla community. An education committee has been formed reviewing the syllabus for the school which will include the local syllabus but will also include a value based syllabus. The committee will also oversee the standard of education in Palitana.

The second initiative at Palitana is the Pragyatirth Takshashila, an eminent center of learning open to all the Jain Sadhvi Sangha in Palitana and beyond. The Bhoomi Poojan for this novel centre, which is at planning stage with the aim of completing construction by 2020, was conducted in a very peaceful manner and there were lots of positive vibrations throughout the event. In the Bhoomi Poojan, forgiveness was asked for all the harm which might be caused in the process of establishing the centre. Morari Bapu also graced the event with his presence and took part in the Bhoomi Poojan with Acharya Shriji.

The school and the proposed learning center are beautifully located just on the edge of the town with the Shatrunjaya river on the outskirts of the site and with a clear view of the temples on the top of Shatrunjaya hill.

To see more of the colourful celebrations, go to: https://youtu.be/Radz0x6-_2E



Reflections of Guests Attending the Kutch & Palitana Celebrations

It is not surprising that witnessing such powerful positive vibrations awakens the deepest of emotions and appreciation – as shown by the viewpoints of some Veerayatan devotees visiting the Kutch complex:

It has been a very long time coming, but in January 2017, it finally happened. My first ever trip to Veerayatan actually became a reality. My pre-conceptions of India were completely thrown out of the window on arrival at Bhuj airport. A welcome from a senior student kitted out in the world renowned 'Modi' look was a lovely first impression. His warm greeting felt as if he knew us for years and we were old buddies. Truly professional and humbling! We went straight to Veerayatan Haripar campus where an army of student hosts greeted us for registration almost immediately making us feel at home from home.

We were privileged to have time with Tai Ma and many of the sadhvijis whilst we were there. Not only being blessed by the one whose vision encompasses the achievements of this wonderful organisation but seeing at first hand the work at the colleges and the schools. To say what I saw 'blew me away' is almost an understatement. The words 'transforming lives' is over used in these times of strife and unhappiness globally but here at Veerayatan no other words describe the achievements to date. Working backwards from the senior students who have such appeal and charisma to the youngest of children for whom the mere thought of education would have been alien had it not been for Tai Ma and Veerayatan. What really struck me during conversations with Tai Ma was her vision and reasoning why such work is undertaken: 'the next Tirthankar will come from such areas and schools'. The atmosphere, environment, teaching, surrounding and simplicity and with Sadhvijis being the role models makes it a perfect place for the next Tirthankar to come from.

– Shandipbhai Shah, UK

Ashokbhai Domadia, JAINA president from USA has been associated with Veerayatan since 1973. He stated:

'..... The moment was historic as two religious Leaders of different faiths - Jain and Hindu - were sharing the same platform and attendees were blessed with their divine presence.....'

'.... Veerayatan Kutch and Palitana meticulously planned the entire event and with loving care for hospitality, logistics, food, etc. for comfort of all the attendees. JAINA team left with life long memories of Veerayatan Celebrations 2017 and thanks all the Volunteers of Veerayatan for hosting an amazing event.....'

– Ashokbhai Domadia, USA

I was blown away at what Acharyaji has been able to create and continues to create. One of the most memorable moments was the dance show done by the students of Veerayatan. An incredible entertaining show, but also one with many lessons to learn. Hopefully they get to show this to the rest of the world!

– Sneha Doshi, Kenya





When we reached Haripar on Monday evening the sight of the University complex was beyond expectation and my previous experience of Indian Universities. What we saw was State of Art Engineering Colleges of a type which would normally only be attended by pupils of very affluent background but in this case it was open to children from the less fortunate of society. Next day when speaking to some of the students I sensed what they were getting from the University and what confidence the education was building in them. This can only improve society in coming years. Visit to Rudrani School was a treat from other end. To hear about the generous donations of land to build the school after the earthquake was very very touching.

In Palitana we saw the School developed for the children of very less fortunate living in the Holy Land of Jainism. This is again a State of Art School which would normally be built for children of very affluent families.

It was a treat to see the energy level of Acharya Shriji whether in ensuring that all was as per her high standards or getting involved in folk dance celebration with the younger generation. It is said the highest religion is humanity. What I have seen and felt, in this and previous visits to Veerayatan, is that Veerayatan under the leadership and vision of Acharya Shri Chandnaji is the champion of this.

Well done Veerayatan, Keep up the good work!
- Dineshbhai Shah, Manchester

Daniel Mwita, the project coordinator for the CP unit in Kenya, was sponsored to visit Veerayatan and take part in the celebrations to enable him see and learn how community projects are run by Veerayatan.

Daniel was so happy having visited Veerayatan and seeing first hand the projects running in Kutch and Palitana and attending all the celebrations that were taking place. His comment after returning to Kenya concerning Veerayatan was "EXCELLENCE AT ITS BEST!"





RAJGIR CELEBRATIONS

Eye Camp

Every year Acharya Shriji's birthday is celebrated in Rajgir by establishing an eye camp. This year was no different. Over a period of 6 days, 1060 cataract operations were conducted and 6,500 people were seen as outpatients with a view to diagnosing and planning treatment. The doctors and the staff worked tirelessly over the 6 day period - Well done and thank you to all!

Prathista of the Parshvanath temple

The Prathista ceremony of the Parshva Jinalay, the temple dedicated to Parshvanath Bhagwan built on the grounds of the Rajgir campus, took place between 14 - 17 January 2017. There were around 45 Sadhus and Sadhvis in the Veerayatan campus during this time and Pujya Acharya Shri Maniprabhasagarji Maharaj conducted all the ceremonies in the presence of Acharya Shri Chandra Shuriswarji Maharaj, Acharya Shri Dev Chandra Sagar Shuriswarji Maharaj and Acharya Shri Chandanaji Maharaj. This very special ceremony brought into fruition a long term project to create a place of worship within the peaceful setting of the Rajgir campus, being the first temple within Veerayatan. It seems as though the Rajgir campus is transformed, so serene, so spiritual and so beautiful. Let us all make every effort to go to Rajgir and pay our reverence to Parshvanath Bhagwan, Mahavir Bhagwan and Rshabhadev Bhagwan.

To see more of the colourful celebrations in Rajgir, go to:

Part 1 : Prathista: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzkVT2L5Cz8>

Part 2: Prathista: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V20cx8AkszM>

Part 3: Prathista: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgHYhL1pfow>



Inauguration of Harikeshiya School

Hand in hand with the developments in Palitana, another state of the art free school (Harikeshiya School) was inaugurated on 18 February 2017 in Pawapuri. This school is special as it has been built with the destitute children of the Mushahar caste in mind, the most neglected community, living in the village of Puri, Bihar. Remarkably the children of this community have never experienced education before and are the first generation to attend school. Around 120 children have already been registered since January and have started their studies at this school. Acharya Shriji distributed school uniforms, a school bag, shoes and socks, books and other accessories to all the children registered.

**To see more of the colourful celebrations in Rajgir, go to:
Part 4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiSO91PdGEY>**





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