YOUNGMINDS

a publication by the Young Jains of America



JAIN TEMPLES FROM AROUND THE UNITED STATES

Federation of Jain Associations in North America A Non-Profit Tax Exempt Religious Organization. IRS Code Section 501 (c)(3) El #54-1280028

jains in action: FROM THE US TO INDIA

■ COMPILED BY MANSI SHAH

This is the story of 22-year-old Niyati Sheth in Oklahoma.

Niyati met Acharya Shri Chandanaji and Sadhvi Shubhamji at YJA and JAINA conventions and she was influenced by them. Both her parents had been to Bihar and shared stories of abject poverty and the state of children in Bihar. At the JAINA convention in Chicago last July, she met Kirit Daftary, Chairman of the Tirthodhar Committee who told her about the school and medical clinic his committee was helping to build in Lachhawar - Birth place of Lord Mahaveer at an estimated cost of \$90,000 under the guidance of Acharya Chandanaji, Niyati decided to help.

She set a goal of raising \$15,000. She planned a 2-day Yoga & Meditation workshop featuring H. H. Shree Amrendra Muni for Mid-October. "From that point, the project escalated! We rented a large hall, planned a schedule of events, made brochures and posters, and advertised. Musicians are in constant need of relaxation and breath management. As a music major, it was quite easy to convince the faculty and student body - Indian or not - to take part." said Niyati. Registration fee ranged from \$50 to \$100. But the September 11 tragedy forced cancellation of the camp and no future date was set. No one asked for a refund of the registration fee and she convinced others to contribute for her project. She raised \$5,100.

"As a member of several organizations, I am currently in a position to positively influence a large diversity of people. Surprisingly, there are many people who seem to ignore the consequences of severe poverty abroad. There are so many people who get caught up in their own problems, not realiz-

ing that at least they have a chance of reconciling their situation. The poverty stricken people of Bihar are caught in a terrible cycle driven by hunger, thirst, unhygenic conditions, lack of medical care, and lack of an education - or simply the understanding that a better life exists," says Niyati.

She continues efforts to meet her goals- she had an unique idea of helping her favorite charity as a gift to someone. Niyati sends the intended dollar amount to the charity fund. The charitable organization sends thank you card to her friend for whom Niyati donated this dollar amount. The recipient of the card gets exposure and awareness of the good cause. The idea mushrooms and the cause receives more funding and more supporters.

Tirthodhar committee will send Gyan Daan gift cards on your behalf to anyone who wants to donate for this school. You can send these cards to your friends and families for any occasions. Donations received from you will be tax deductible and we will send acknowledgment card to your recipient. You both will be blessed for Gyan Dan to students of Tirthankar Mahavir School.

For more information on the Tirthankar Mahavir School, please visit http://home.hot.rr.com/jaintirth/. or contact Kirit Daftary Phone: 254-776-4209, E-mail: netrat@att.net

A senior at University of Central Oklahoma majoring in Opera Performance/Pre-medicine Niyati Sheth has been active in YJA as their Oklahoma City representative for six years. She is President of her music fraternity - Sigma Alpha Iota and performed abroad in countries such as Italy, England and Ireland with choir and chamber ensembles/ active in Presidential leadership council and Microbiological research.

from my desk to yours

Jai Jinendra.

This edition of Young Minds focuses on temples and ways to worship that can be found in North America. It also includes the new YJA Spotlight which gives active youth groups a chance to be seen by communities nationwide.

This Young Minds also includes articles that range from discussion on the karma theory to compassionate living. In addition, we share the inside scoop on upcoming events, including activities for those 21 and over at the upcoming convention.

I would like to invite all of you to visit the discussion board, especially with different ideas you may have. In addition, if you feel there is someone who should be featured, or like to write, contact me anytime (mansi.shah@yja.org).

Sincerely,

Mansi Shah



yja SPOTLIGHT chicago & houston



Local Representatives:
Jamie Shah
(above) and
Bijal Shah
(right).



During the month of February, the youth of Chicago got together, laced up their skates, and went ice skating. Over twenty youth participated in this activity. This was a great achievement, because it was the first event sponsored by Chicago's Jain youth group. It was definitely a success, and the local representatives thank all that were involved.

They ask that all Chicago youth join them for their next event.

"With Chicago being a large city, many think that youth activities are going on all the time, but that wasn't happening. Now that we have started planning more events I'm so glad to see people put forth the effort to spend time with their fellow Jains, get involved, and most importantly have a good time!" said Bijal Shah, Chicago Local Representative. Chicago Local Representatives are looking for youth to get involved. Contact Bijal Shah (bij1184@hotmail.com) or Jamie Shah (JNS710@aol.com).

The Jain Fellowship of Houston is an excellent youth group made up of dedicated young Jain followers. Our youth group this year has taken a sharp turn from the past routines while placing an additional emphasis on service within our community. During the last year, we have organized several projects to help beautify and clean our temple, and educate our community. While working closely with our Pathshala, we have helped organize and participate in programs with a joint effort. Arpan Shah, the current President, organized two major fundraising drives to help raise funds for the tragic events of September 11th and to support the Young Jains of America 2002 New Jersey Convention.

In January, Arpan Shah was selected to serve as the South Regional Coordinator on YJA Executive Board. Arpan Shah and Shilpi Desai, the Houston Local Representative, have been getting the help from the Houston youth to make sure they present a spectacular youth group session at the convention.



Local Representatives:
Arpan Shah
(right) and
Shilpi Desai
(below)





JAIN NETWORKING FORUM

What is JNF & what does YJA Convention 2002 want to accomplish from JNF?

In addition to bringing you highly acclaimed speakers, lively discussions, and interactive presentations, YJA has many new and exciting events to get you pumped for July 4th. Many of you have given feedback and told us that you would like to see more items and activities available for those that are 21 and over and we have answered.

What exactly is a JNF session?

JNF sessions include separate icebreakers, than those with all the other participants, where groups are made by JNF participants who share common interests. In the following days, there will be presentations and skits formulated for those in this age group where people will be able to network at the highest level. Most JNF sessions will be geared towards social mixers rather than regular discussions.

What else does this convention offer to you?

You will **meet real CEOs** of major companies as they discuss how Jain principles have allowed them to become successful in their positions.

There will be a **Professional Career Fair** where Jain representatives from top companies all across America will be present to accept your resumes and help you find the careers/internships. These connections may serve as invaluable tools to help you "get your foot in the door" towards the career of your choice. You will enjoy **3 nights of cultural awareness** through a enriching Mela night (Indian carnival), a traditional garba raas dance, and a traditional semi-formal.

" As one of the coordingtors of JNF, I wanted to express what will make this stand out as a premier way to network. I have attended a YJA convention before always hoping to not only make friends but also to meet people that would help me move up the professional ladder of life. And because of this personal goal, I decided (along with the others) a CHANGE was necessary. JNF will allow young Jain adults that have finished most of their academic career to interact with peers that are on that same wavelength. I can guarantee that if you sign up for JNF you will at least make one contact either on a social level or that on a business one!!!

-Lopa Vadi

As a JNF participant what else would I get?

"networking materials"
personalized business cards
access password-protected website (which will continue after convention)

objects found in a what to do with derasar

them and what they mean?

■ By Nivea Kothari AND ARPAN SHAH

Swastika: First, make the design of the swastika with the rice. It has four directions which symbolizes the four state of existence. Secondly, make three small heaps of rice over it. The three small heaps represent the three jewels. Thirdly, make a design of the siddha-shila (crescent moon with a dot in the middle). The dot symbolizes the soul.

Bell: As one leaves the temple ringing the bell is the way to end prayer. It means that one expresses the delight of doing darshan of the paramatma and having worshipped them.

Chamar: One uses this and dances in front of the murthis, fanning it back and forth. This is usually used when there is puja and lots of joyous singing, however one can do this at any time of darshan. This is used to express gratitude and joy to the lord.

Dhoop: This is usually lit up by incense and used as one of the eight types of worship. In order to use it to worship one must take the handle and move as they would an aarti.

> Bhandhar: The bhandhar is used for donations, especially useful for those who want to anonymously donate. These donations usually go toward maintenance of the temple and other religious worship.





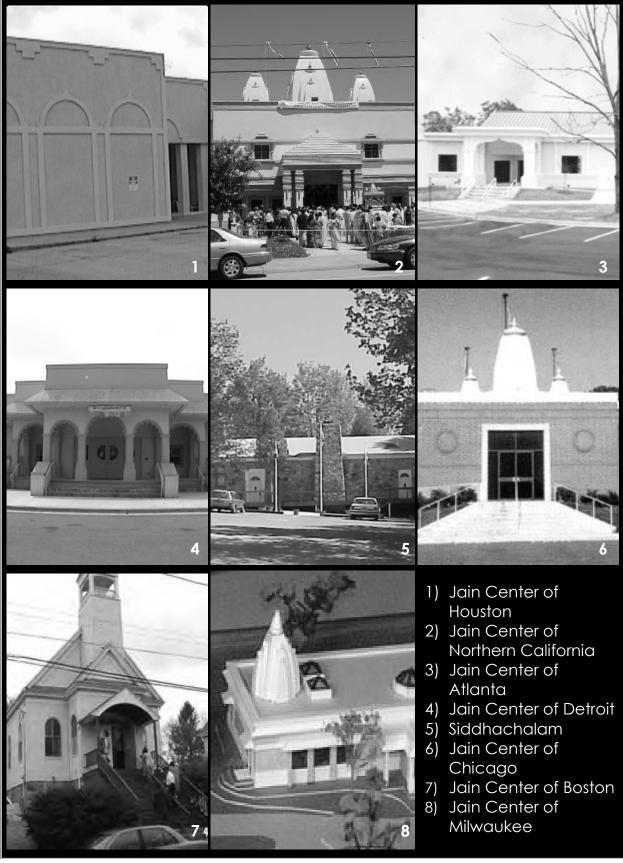






LANDIRS DERAKS





Instant Karma

■ By Sachin D. Shah

There's a chapter called "Rebellion" in book five of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Ivan, one of the title characters, explains to his brother Alyosha why he cannot accept God's world. It's a masterfully written chapter in a brilliant novel, one I have spent countless nights contemplating and arguing with friends over. If you haven't already, I urge you to read both the chapter and the novel, since any attempt I make to paraphrase it could never do it justice; but for the sake of discussion, here goes anyway.

Ivan, a tortured, rational, intellectual is talking to his compassionate, deeply religious brother Alyosha, a novice monk, about reconciling the suffering of innocents with the existence of God. He recounts a recent story he read in the newspaper about a child of five who was beaten, thrashed, and kicked by her parents for no reason, then locked up at night outside in the cold and frost. Moreover, when she didn't ask to be taken out to go to the bathroom, her own mother smeared her face and filled her mouth with excrement. Evoking an image that has stayed with me since the first time I read it, Ivan asks his brother:

"Can you understand why a little creature, who can't even understand what's done to her, should beat her little aching heart with her tiny fist in the dark and the cold, and weep her meek unresentful tears to dear, kind God to protect her?"

In his next story, Ivan recalls a tale of an aristocratic retired general in the days of the feudal system in Russia. He owned property with roughly two thousand serfs and had kennels of hundreds of hounds and nearly a hundred dogboys, all mounted, and in uniform. As Ivan explains:

"One day a serf-boy, a little child of eight, threw a stone in play and hurt the paw of the general's favorite hound. 'Why is my favorite dog lame?' He is told that the boy threw a stone that hurt the dog's paw. 'So you did it.' The general looked the child up and down. 'Take him.' He was taken -- taken from his mother and kept shut up all night. Early that morning the general comes out on horseback, with the hounds, his dependents, dog-boys, and huntsmen, all mounted around him in full hunting parade. The servants are summoned for their edification, and in front of them all stands the mother of the child. The child is brought from the lock-up. It's a gloomy, cold, foggy, autumn day, a capital day for hunting. The general orders the child to be undressed; the child is stripped naked. He shivers, numb with terror, not daring to cry.... 'Make him run,' commands the general. 'Run! Run!' shout the dogboys. The boy runs.... 'At him!' yells the general, and he sets the whole pack of hounds on the

child. The hounds catch him, and tear him to pieces before his mother's eyes!"

What could the boy ever have done to deserve such a fate? Ivan uses the stories to illustrate his point; he simply cannot reconcile the existence of suffering among innocents with the existence of a just God. He rejects the notion that there is some higher truth, some eternal, unknowable harmony in the universe at work that justifies everything.

"If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It's beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too, furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future? I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too; but there can be no such solidarity with children. And if it is really true that they must share responsibility for all their fathers' crimes, such a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension. Some jester will say, perhaps, that the child would have grown up and have sinned, but you see he didn't grow up; he was torn to pieces by the dogs, at eight years old. Oh, Alyosha, I am not blaspheming! I understand, of course, what an upheaval of the universe it will be when everything in heaven and earth blends in one hymn of praise and everything that lives and has lived cries aloud: 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed.' When the mother embraces the fiend who threw her child to the dogs, and all three cry aloud with tears, 'Thou art just, O Lord!' then, of course, the crown of knowledge will be reached and all will be made clear. But what pulls me up here is that I can't accept that harmony. And while I am on earth, I make haste to take my own measures."

While he is on earth, he makes haste to take his own measures. Ivan's argument in *The Brothers Karamazov* resonated with me when I first read the novel, and continues to today. While Dostoevsky writes about Christian beliefs, the ideas discussed are relevant to Jainism as well, and particularly to karma theory, which I admittedly have not studied in detail and do not understand well. While I do think I have a likely oversimplified understanding of the gist of karmic philosophy, I hope I will be called out if I make any inappropriate assumptions.

Karma theory, as I understand it, basically says that all effects can be traced to a particular cause. Our intentions, thoughts, and actions stay with us and impact our future situation, circumstance, and happiness. To quote a similar concept from the Bible, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We are thus required to take responsibility for our actions, and those who do right are rewarded, those who do wrong are punished. Sounds fair enough, right?

The catch, of course, is that karma transcends our lives and stays with us. As such, karma and reincarnation are



companion doctrines. According to a literal interpretation of Jainism, karmas are invisible, fine particles of matter that surround us, like molecules of oxygen and nitrogen in the air we breathe, and our souls attract these karmas. Since our soul (atma) is our spiritual essence, its transmigration, complete with its accumulated karmas (both "bad" and "good"), into another, worldly life signals our rebirth.

But this is where I run into some philosophical problems. Karma theory, as I understand it, purportedly offers reconciliation between inequality, injustice, and suffering in our mundane lives with some larger sense of justice in the universal order. On the grand scale, all is just.

But I can't help wondering: are the millions of slum dwellers in Mumbai—living in poverty, without toilets, running water, or electricity, without enough money to feed themselves or their children, and without access to any kind of health care—emblematic of the higher justice inherent in the universal order that governs our lives?

I've always been taught that the Jain response to these realities is to show compassion, which I have always strived to do. But what about the beliefs of our religion that seemingly validate these realities as somehow "justified"? Is a starving, destitute child in rural Botswana, orphaned by an AIDS epidemic that has infected a full third of her nation's population, somehow responsible for having been born in such a situation? Karma theory, like Christianity here, requires faith in the greater, unfathomable harmony. Either everything is justified, all will be revealed, or both. At least at this point in my life, though, I find that explanation hard to accept.

With karma theory, there's an implicit blame assigned for one's misfortune. Ivan's argument always comes to mind for me at this point. What does the innocent child have to do with any of that? How can she be made out to be guilty? How can she be made to suffer for the deeds of a past life to which she has no conscious connection?

I believe that I have a soul that is in fact transcendent, but I also know that I am ignorant of the deeds attached to it from previous lives. I don't have dreams of past lives, and I've only ever been conscious of myself as myself in this life. Fundamentally, we are all "this-worldly," and while on this earth, I feel compelled, like Ivan, to take my own measures. And by my "this-worldly" measure, a starving infant, dying an insufferable death from dehydration at the hands of cholera-induced diarrhea, while his mother cradles him helplessly, could never have deserved his fate.

Yes, I am distorting the question some with my examples by playing on emotions; how can you possibly say that a poor, dying child had it coming? But these scenarios are realities, and I cannot reconcile them by simply subscribing to karma theory. I don't necessarily expect a good answer, but I certainly can't accept what thus far seems a bad one.

I also feel like it's particularly easy for us to accept karma theory without protest, since we have it so good. We are by and large well off, born into circumstances that don't leave us in want of basic necessities like food, shelter, or health care. In many cases we are indeed blessed—with intelligence, wealth, education, and opportunities. So on the flip side of the implicit blame that I reject (assigned to those who are suffering), is the implicit sense of entitlement that we

could conceivably feel for being in such a good situation. We must have done something right to be here. Well, I reject that, too. Most of us were born on third base; let's not act like we hit a triple.

To both my mundane, rational mind and my spiritual, intuitive sense, there is only a seemingly arbitrary disparity between my privilege and so many others' poverty. I can't just chalk it up to karma and walk away whistling merrily. It's troubling.

Even if you do believe deeply that there is a higher, unknowable, universal order at work, in any given person's life—from their worldly perspective (the only one they know on a daily basis)—practically speaking, circumstance is still in fact arbitrary (or, at the very least, appears so).

Faith is a fine line for me. I rely heavily on my spiritual convictions in my daily life, but they must make intuitive sense to me. I can always take responsibility for my own intentions, thoughts, and actions; it's those that I've never been conscious of or associated with in any tangible way that I can't. To expect others to bear that responsibility as a means of explaining their misfortune and suffering seems to me a rather facile and unfair way of justifying an otherwise frighteningly irrational phenomenon.

Have a different
viewpoint?
Want to share it with
other Jains?
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YJA

Discussion Board
All you need is a name
and password and you
are in!
Talk about this article,
share your views.
Check it out at

Http://www.yja.org/

discuss

Milk – Liquid Meat?

■ EXTRACTED FROM YOUNG JAINS NAIROBI

Worried that you cannot have that one glass of milk, well don't ...because you actually don't need it. Dairy products are considered a dietary staple by many, yet they are neither a necessary not a desirable part of a healthy human diet. As a matter of fact human beings drinking milk is against the natural order of things. Once weaned, no animal feels the need for mail. Why then do we human beings? Besides, no other mammal drinks the mild of another species. Drinking milk is an unnecessary theft. Do you think that a calf would benefit from drinking human milk? If we were meant to drink milk, our own species would produce it.

Whole fat cow's milk is suited to the nutritional needs of calves who, unlike human babies, double their weight in 47 days (as opposed to 180 for humans). Furthermore, they grow four healthy stomachs and weigh 300 pounds within a year. Cow's milk contains three times as much protein as human milk and 50% more fat. You may have noticed that when we are sick, the very thought of milk makes us nauseous. We should listen to the body and what it wants. This is because after four years of age, as a natural process, a large number of those people lose the ability to digest lactose – the carbohydrate found in milk – and this results in persistent diarrhea, gas and stomach cramps.

There is a misconception that milk and dairy products are a protein substitute and a rich source of calcium and minerals. On the contrary, milk not only contains no iron, it actually blocks absorption. Vegetables are the best source of iron. In "iron" terms, a bowl of spinach is equivalent to 50 gallons of milk. Milk only has vitamin D, which can be obtained from the sun.

Another myth is that mild is a major source of calcium for the body. While it is true that milk and other dairy products are rich in calcium, how much does the body actually absorb? The body's fractional absorption from milk is 32%, while the comparative figures for cabbage and cauliflower are as high as 65% and 69% respectively. A study conducted the Dairy Board of America revealed that a glass of milk did not increase the body's calcium level at all.

Dark green legumes, nuts and seeds are all powerhouses and far more effective in providing the so-called "benefits" of milk.

The important question is: should you absorb it at all? Asians and Africans are lactose intolerant; they do not have the enzyme lactase, so they cannot digest milk. Milk can cause a number of health problems. It is one of the biggest allergens of all foods, including constipation, asthma, and acne, to name a few. As a matter of fact, the calcium contained in milk actually becomes a health hazard as undigested proportions of it are deposited in the urinary system and become kidney stones.

In addition to being an unnatural food for humans, cow's milk, like other dairy products, is unhealthy. John A. McDougall, M.D. calls dairy foods "liquid meat," because their nutritional contents are so similar. Rich in fat and cholesterol, dairy products, including cheese, milk, butter, cream yogurt, and whey contribute to the development of the three

Another condition that milk aggravates rather than alleviates is osteoporosis. Studies have shown that it is excess protein rather than lack of calcium that causes this condition.

Yet another misconception is that milk helps ulcers. It may give temporary relief, but actually causes acidity, which further destroys the stomach lining and aggravates the problem. Persistent drinking of milk also weakens the body and makes it prone to asthma and cancer.

The Final Question is: Can we do without milk then? To answer this, drink a glass of milk and get your blood tested a half an hour later. Your esonophilic cell count will be high showing your body's allegory.

Now take a minute, and sit back and consider the serious health risks of a dairy based diet. Is it worthwhile to make your body undergo such sufferings? Aside from obvious health reasons- environmental devastations, a waste of resources, and himsa of billions of animals are by products of milk production. Thus switching from milk to vegan products makes perfect sense.

McDonald's Apologizes

Last year, the Young Jains of America Board worked with lawyers and Justin Jones in giving the Jain viewpoint on the beef flavoring in McDonald's French fries. YJA was one of the religions organizations affected by vegetarian misconceptions. The cochairs at the time, Shubhra Jain and Naishadh Shah, had written a four page description on Jainism and how McDonald's affected us.

The following news comes from Reuters.

NEW YORK (Reuters) - McDonald's Corp. plans to issue a wider apology and pay \$10 million to vegetarian and religious groups for using beef flavoring in its French fries, in a proposed settlement of lawsuits charging that the company had misled consumers

McDonald's said it did not use beef ingredients in its products in India and issued an apology last year, but the offended groups felt it did not go far enough. Under the proposed settlement, McDonald's would publish a more detailed apology on its Web site and other publications, and convene an advisory board to advise it on vegetarian matters.

Though McDonald's in 1990 switched to vegetable oil to cook its fries, the disclosure that they were still flavored with beef tallow angered vegetarians and others who do not eat beef.

"I'm not happy with the \$10 million, and wish I could do better in terms of money. But our focus was to change the fast food industry, and this is a big victory for consumers in this country because we've brought this giant to do this," said Harish Bharti, an attorney who filed the first lawsuit against McDonald's on behalf of 16 million Hindus and vegetarians last May.



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Jai Jinendra.

YJA Convention 2002 is well underway and with your attendance, it promises to be the best convention yet! We are proud to unveil the 5th biennial national youth convention in Mawah, New Jersey this July 4th to July 7th. With nearly 1000 youth from North America and the rest of the world, *Walking the Path of Jainism*, promises to be an enlightening and exhilarating experience.

This year's site is the spacious and secluded **Sheraton**, **Crossroads**. With complete site access, attendees will enjoy all the amenities of the hotel. During sessions and recreational hour, attendees will enjoy the basking sun and participate in recreational sports.

Whether you're a first timer or a regular convention goer, YJA has something for you! *Walking the Path of Jainism* focuses on showing Jain youth the importance of Jainism in their daily lives. Through highly acclaimed speakers, lively discussions, and interactive presentations, youth will learn the joy of bhajans, realize the power of Ahimsa, understand the importance of pooja, and much more.

YJA Convention 2002 features over seventy unique sessions—giving you diversity and flexibility in the sessions you choose. In addition, this year's sessions breakdown by knowledge levels, permitting attendees to select sessions that fit their echelon.

At nights, let loose with the traditional raas-garba, semi-formal, and an all NEW Mela night (Indian carnival). On the first night, participants will play Anthankshri, highlight themselves with Mendhi, admire Indian art, drink Mango Lassi, and enjoy a lot more of India's great culture.

With plenty of souvenir items, several educational booklets, and a completely interactive CD, attendees will be leaving for home with lots of goodies. And when participants arrive home, they will receive a "mini-me" CD, capturing all of their great moments during the convention

YJA hopes you're as excited as we are. Only limited spots are available. This year's attendees range all across the national and international perspective. Don't miss out on a great opportunity to see how other Jains are holding it down. It is sure to be an eye-opening learning experience!

Ronak Shah & Chintan Shah Co-Chairs, 2002 Young Jains of America Co-chairs@yja.org One WEEKEND...
this SUMMER...
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Miami, Florida Newark, New Jersey Austin, Texas Battle Creek, Michigan Long Beach, California frien YJA

* \$25 deposit required to guarantee your registration. Deposit is refunded at time of participation.

Young Jains of America, friends, fun, and Habitat for Humanity...
THE PIECES JUST FIT SO WELL TOGETHER.

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