

YOUNG MINDS

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Jain Legends: can YOU believe them?

In this issue

Perspectives on Women's Roles in Jainism

Friends Don't Let Friends Eat Meat, or Do They?

“What would be the condition of the Indian Sanskrit literature if the contribution of the Jains were removed? The more I study Jain literature the more happy and wonder struck I am.”

- Dr. Hertel, Germany

Co-Chairs

Ronak Shah
918.269.7665
Ronak.Shah@yja.org
Suchita Shah
248.470.9268
Suchita.Shah@yja.org

Directors

Education
Ami Shah
323.314.3571
Ami.Shah@yja.org
Events
Karishma Shah
310.502.6169
Karishma.Shah@yja.org
Finance - Fundraising
Arpan Shah
281.804.7964
Arpan.Shah@yja.org
Information Technology
Paras Dodhia
416.271.0800
Paras.Dodhia@yja.org
Public Relations
Chirag Shah
414.339.6023
Chirag.Shah@yja.org
Publications
Arpan R. Shah
646.339.7020
ArpanR.Shah@yja.org
Project Development
Lopa Vadi
732.522.5832
Lopa.Vadi@yja.org

Regional Coordinators

Mid-Atlantic
Dipa Talati
917.371.1476
Dipa.Talati@yja.org
Midwest
Nirali Vora
630.452.2667
Nirali.Vora@yja.org
Northeast
Lily Jain
416.931.8149
Lily.Jain@yja.org
South
Rishabh Khara
469.438.4331
Rishabh.Khara@yja.org
Southeast
Priya Palvia
678.525.5716
Priya.Palvia@yja.org
West
Pinita Shah
714.310.1034
Pinita.Shah@yja.org

Board of Trustees

Prem Jain
Sachi Jain
Naishaidh Shah
Nirav Shah
bot@yja.org

Letter from the Co-Chairs:

Jai Jinendra,

With YJA Convention 2002 over and a new board elected, YJA now focuses on its direction for upcoming year. The new board convened this past August in Chicago for four days. There was very little sleep and a lot of chai, but the projects that were drafted plan to be the best ever. Our hope and mission for this year is to play “a much great part in our member’s daily lives.” To that end, YJA has taken some significant steps...

YJA will host six Regional Conferences during the next six months. “Regional Fest” will kick off Thanksgiving Break in Houston and conclude during Martin Luther King weekend in Atlanta and Chicago. Other destinations include Toronto, Los Angeles, and Easton (PA) during Winter Break. Spots are filling up fast. Register online at www.yja.org and visit page 8 for more information.

During Paryushan, YJA created “Michammi Dukkadam” e-cards for Jains worldwide to show their love and forgiveness. YJA also added a new segment to the website explaining the meaning and importance of Paryushan. You can also see in the spotlight section on page 4 how the Jain Students Association at NYU, like youth groups all over the nation, celebrated our biggest holiday.

This December and January, YJA will be sending 10 youth to the Veerayatan site in Bhuj (Kutch), India. Veerayatan is an international organization established over 29 years ago by Acharya Shri Chandanaji, the first woman to receive the title of Acharya in the Jain tradition. Veerayatan is committed to extending the concept of spirituality and service to humanity. The youth will be helping the earthquake affected town by teaching, providing health care, and performing administrative tasks. Please visit www.yja.org to learn more or turn to page 11.

With YJA growing year after year and continually initiating more projects, this year’s board has created an ad-hoc committee for YJA Convention 2004. This creation will allow YJA Executive to focus on other national projects while still hosting an unbelievable national convention. The ad hoc committee will supervise the local convention committee in the throwing the best convention yet! If you are interested in joining the select ad-hoc committee, please email lopa.vadi@yja.org and turn to page 2 to learn more.

Thank you,

Suchita Shah and Ronak Shah
Co-Chairs, 2002-2003
Young Jains of America
cochairs@yja.org



YJA Convention 2004 - Get Involved!

Host City Convention Committee Wanted!

This past July 4th, YJA hosted its 5th biennial nation youth convention in New Jersey entitled "Walking the Path of Jainism." It was an overwhelming success. Nearly 1000 youth gathered and shared their heritage, learning from scholars and meeting other like-minded youth from all over the world.

With YJA Convention 2002 closed, the journey begins for YJA Convention 2004. The New Jersey Convention Committee performed an outstanding job, providing more sessions and greater variety, than any previous convention. It will be a tough feat to beat, but each YJA Convention continues to be better every time.

YJA Executive will release the bid guidelines for Convention 2004 this coming January. Potential host cities will have two-three months to write a bid packet, providing details for the next convention and stating why they should be the host city.

Sheraton, NY
Site of YJA
Convention 2002

If you are interested in hosting a convention, please email cochairs@yja.org. A convention takes a year a half of solid work, fifteen committed members, a supportive community, but the culmination of all that hard work is unbelievable.

YJA Ad-Hoc Committee Members Wanted!

National Conventions takes an exuberant amount of time. This year, YJA has created an ad-hoc committee, Young Jains of America Ad-Hoc Convention Committee (YJAACC), to work directly with the local convention committee in planning YJA Convention 2004. This way, YJA Executive can focus on providing other national projects in addition to the national convention. YJAACC members, totaling six, will supervise the process of the convention, providing creativity, expertise, and support to the local convention committee. This group will

Note from the Editor:

Jai Jinendra,

This edition of Young Minds focuses on the legends that all of us have heard ever since we were little children. As we grow older, we tend to analyze them a little more deeply and question their value. This issue will help us discover our own truths in what we take from our great fables.

This issue also features a variety of topics pertaining to prevalent questions on Jainism, such as Gender Bias, vegetarianism, and others.

There's also a spotlight of Youth groups that have been active in each of their designated regions. Also, be on the watch out for the six regional conferences that are happening over all the nation.

We are also sending out YM²'s (e-publication) every two weeks. Sign up on yjamembers@yahoogroups.com to become a member. If you are interested in joining YJA's publication committee or just want to help out (get your name on national publications), please e-mail me at arpanr.shah@yja.org.

Sincerely,
Arpan Shah

"I say with conviction that the doctrine for which the name of Lord Mahavir is glorified nowadays is the doctrine of Ahimsa. If anyone has practiced to the fullest extent and has propagated most the doctrine of Ahimsa, it was Lord Mahavira."

- Mahatma Gandhi

YJA *Spotlight:*



The JSA boys section of Pratikaman

New York University & Duke University



The JSA executive board



The Jain Students Association at New York University began its second year this August. It has grown tremendously with over forty active members attending events this year. It was started by current YJA co-chair Ronak Shah. The duties this year are handled by an entirely new Executive Board. JSA has shown a strong South

Asian presence on the urban campus by offering a great mix of religion and culture. JSA hosted Samvatsari Pratikraman, for the first time ever this year. A Jain dinner was served and Mupattis and Katasnas were provided to those performing Pratikaman.

Members from both in and outside the NYU community were present and amazed that an organization of college students had organized something so rich in religion.

Their most talked-about event last spring was Holi in the Park. It was co-sponsored by a multitude of organizations both in and outside NYU. The event created an aura of community amongst college students within the New York area. The festival, which has been described as the most exhilarating cultural activity of the year, is already in the planning stages at JSA for the upcoming Spring. In order to make it a success again, JSA is looking for sponsors for this event. If you are interested in helping them, please contact President, Ami Shah (ams393@nyu.edu).

JSA is living out its motto of spreading ahimsa throughout the community by creating events that generate the biggest response from its student body. Participating in National Gandhi Day of Service, and planning for a speaker night on South Asian religions are ways JSA is extending the message of Jainism.

The new group is active with YJA in promoting national events and is also planning a session for the upcoming Mid-Atlantic Regional Convention. The E-Board hopes that the time and effort they have put in this year will make JSA a part of the enduring voice of NYU's multicultural campus.

Getting involved with JSA can be a lot of fun. In order to get more information about JSA and how you can join, email the organization's President Ami Shah (ams393@nyu.edu).

The Duke Jain Students Association (DJSA), known as Ahimsa, was started last January with a mission to educate fellow Jain students about Jainism as well as to raise awareness about Jain ideals in the community. The group started off with nearly 20 members who met every Sunday to discuss various topics, such as Ahimsa, vegetarianism, and meditation to name a few. The group felt that responsibility and leadership should be distributed evenly throughout the group, each person was in charge of bringing a topic or a reading for discussion. It strived to give everyone a deeper understanding of the Jain religion, so the students of DJSA attended Jain Educational Workshops presented by Pravin Shah in Raleigh, NC.

These lectures gave them a chance to ask questions and learn in greater depth about Jainism. Pravin Uncle also provided many organization strategies and reading materials for the group. Beyond education themselves, they have also promoted Jain ideals in many campus forums. A few students of Ahimsa lecture about Jainism and its principles as guest speakers in classes and religious forums. The group hopes to continue this as it endeavors to raise awareness of Jainism. The Ahimsa was also very active during the time of Paryushan this year. They embarked on a group continuous fast for the eight days of Paryushan, with one person volunteering to fast each day. The group fast worked quite successfully as everyone was eager to get involved. They convened on the last day for Pratikaman ceremonies.

Ahimsa has gotten off to a great start in its first year. It looks forward to becoming more involved with YJA as well as the Jain Association of Raleigh. It also hopes to educate themselves more about the Jain religion and hopes to practice the Jain ideals in everyday life.



Sumit Shah
President Of Ahimsa



Feature Article...

Friends Don't Let Friends Eat Meat, Or Do They?

By Mansi Shah

Hypothetical Situation: I'm sitting at a restaurant with 3 of my best friends, one of whom is celebrating her 21st birthday and is being treated to dinner. She orders a meal with some meat and wine presenting a moral issue: Do I still treat my friend to this dinner on her birthday?

I believe in treating my friend to dinner. Before you judge me, let me explain myself to you. I am a 21 year old vegan in her fourth year of college, and I have yet to take a sip of alcohol. I completely believe that all my friends would be better off without alcohol, meat, and dairy, but I am also aware that I live in a society where such things are a social norm.

Jainism is an awesome religion and its principles have led me to make the choices I have for myself: my being vegan, my not consuming alcohol, my work habits and the list could continue as I explain everyday process (okay not everyone, but a good majority). I believe Jainism is one of the best religions this world has to offer to mankind and I would like to see it take root and stay healthy in the United States of America.

With that in mind, let us take an example of a familiar event. It's Saturday morning and you have just woken up, turned on Namaste America when the doorbell rings and the man outside is holding a Bible. Majority of people become annoyed and angry at the fellow standing before them, offering what he thinks is the best religion in the world. Not only does he feel that he is helping them take Christianity into their heart, he believes that by accepting the faith they could go to heaven and potentially save their soul. Now should someone really be angry or annoyed with him? Probably not, but you still are annoyed and angry because you had to miss watching Aishwarya or Shah Rukh on television (or in my case Tom chasing Jerry).

If the incident above was annoying, then for Jains to take their beliefs into a social setting and place them on someone else is just as annoying to those affected. When a faith is followed by a majority of people, then it is likely to survive despite whatever annoyance its followers may cau-

se. If all your neighbors are Christian, it is much easier to take upon the identity they have already created, rather than attempting to define your own. However, for a small religion, one that is still unknown to most people outside of India, to be depicted as a super conservative religion placing its ideals on an un-consenting audience would hurt Jainism in great proportions.

But we are all defining the Jain identity, you, me, and the girl who sat next to you at temple last week. We are the ones who choose how Jainism will be viewed tomorrow. We cannot impose our ideas on others, but when in charge of making choices, should make them so that these choices fit our Jain morals. When not in charge, our individual choices must follow the Jain value system while remaining a part of the society in which we choose to live: a society where each person has so many different ideals and morals, where their thoughts come from many different countries, and where assimilation occurs faster than distinction.

And in such a society, it is respect we want to cultivate for ourselves, and our faith, by being fair

and accommodating when circumstances dictate some undesirable action. This makes our preferences known while simultaneously respects the choices of others.

In this melting pot we live in, this is the only way to ensure that Jainism is preserved. We must create a positive identity, or our children and their children will simply take upon another identity as we will have made it hard to tolerate the Jain identity.

Remember Jainism is not a religion about proselytizing, rather one to show your faith by example. Do tell your friends what you think and how you feel, but not by telling them what to do. Friends don't want friends to eat meat, but ultimately, it's my friend's choice, and I can only hope to be an influence, nothing more, nothing less. Jai Jinendra.

"...WE ARE ALL DEFINING THE JAIN IDENTITY, YOU, ME, AND THE GIRL WHO SAT NEXT TO YOU AT TEMPLE LAST WEEK. WE ARE THE ONES WHO CHOOSE HOW JAINISM WILL BE VIEWED TOMORROW."

JAIN L

What is the truth value of Jain Legends? by Pallavi Gala

The Big Question

Are the Jain legends real? Should we believe in them?

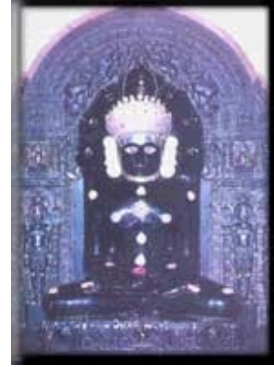
Let us examine why we believe. We believe in something because:

- a) it is true and/or
- b) it proves its presence by showing some resultant effects.

With these criteria in mind, let us examine the Jain legends.

Let us look at the following three groups:

1. The 63 Great Souls (including 24 Tirthankars)
2. Famous Acharyas
3. Exemplary Shravaks



Shree Parshvanath

The lifelines of Parshvanath and Mahavir, the last two Tirthankars, are well documented and their historicity is thus authenticated. There is a mention in the Hindu scriptures of the last Manu named Nabhi and his son Sage Rushabh. The Jains worship this son as our first Tirthankar Rushabhdev of this descending time cycle. This is an indirect outside evidence. Small idols of Rushabhdev have been unearthed in various archeological digs of the Indus valley civilization. This civilization flourished circa 2000-5000 BC. Today's historians believe that Rushabhdev was worshipped during that time. We do not have similar physical proofs for every single one of the 63 great souls. We must remember that we determine historicity of the past events based on current criteria limited by the techniques available today. It would be imprudent to assert that anything not defined by these criteria did not exist. Moreover, the purveyors of these legends happen to be some of the best practitioners of the five great vows. Complete truth happens to be one of these vows. Lives of Tirthankars provide us with examples of the ultimate right conduct. e.g. mere mention of Parshvanath evokes the picture of perfect equanimity.

A closer look at the well-documented life of Hemchandracharya proves to us how one person can be instrumental in altering the course of history while adhering to the purest practices of a Jain sadhu.

A review of the lives of some famous Jain shravaks like Vimalsha, Vastupal, and Tejpal provides stellar example of how to support the Jain Sangh by leaving monumental legacies; thus inspiring us many centuries later.

A patient develops faith in his doctor when the prescribed treatment brings true and lasting relief. Similarly, we would experience everlasting benefits from believing in and learning from the treasure of Jain legends. The resulting positive changes we experience in our lives should be enough to make believers out of ourselves!

Pallavi Gala is a microbiologist and a Biophysicist by education and Mother by occupation. Actively involved in the Arcadai schools and jain patshala. She has been teaching in the Patshala at the Jain Center of Southern California since 1994.



EGENDS

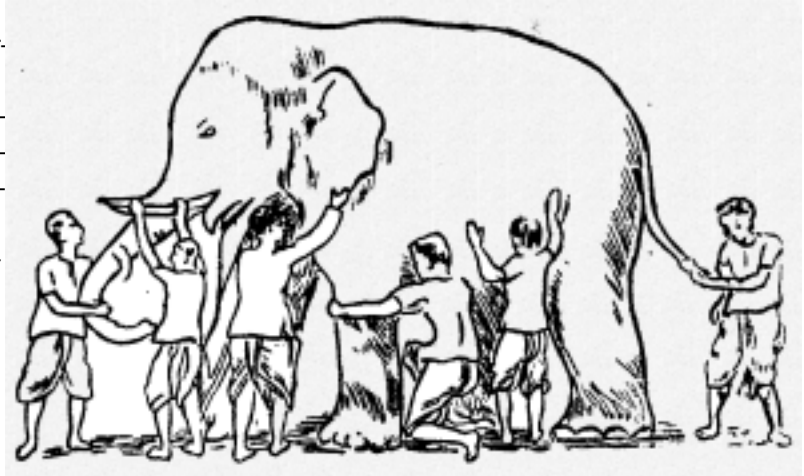
Feature Jain Legend...

ELEPHANT AND THE BLIND MEN

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today."

They had no idea what an elephant is. They decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Everyone of them touched the elephant.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man who touched his leg. "Oh, no! it is like a rope," said the second man who touched the tail. "Oh, no! it is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man who touched the trunk of the elephant. "It is like a big hand fan" said the fourth man who touched the ear of the elephant. "It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant. "It is like a solid pipe," said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant. They began to argue about the elephant and everyone of them insisted that he was right. It looked like they were getting agitated. A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped and asked them, "What is the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what the elephant is like." Each one of them told what he thought the elephant was like. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The reason every one of you is telling it differently because each one of you touched the different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all those features what you all said."



"Oh!" everyone said. There was no more fight. They felt happy that they were all right.

The moral of the story is that there may be some truth to what someone says. Sometimes we can see that truth and sometimes not because truth has many different perspective, which we may not agree too. So, rather than arguing like the blind men, we should realize there is some truth looking at the situation from that perspective.

In Jainism, it is explained that truth can be stated in seven different ways. So, you can see how broad our religion is. It teaches us to be tolerant towards others for their viewpoints. This allows us to live in harmony with the people of different thinking. This is known as the Syadvada, Anekantvad, or the theory of Manifold Predictions.

In times like these, when there is talk of war and intolerance toward many religions, we must be mindful of the different truths involved.

For more stories like this, visit <http://www.jainworld.com/literature.htm>

SIX CONFERENCES IN SIX MONTHS!

This year Young Jains of America is proud to present Regional Fest for the first time ever in all six regions of the United States. There will be regional conferences occurring in the Mid-Atlantic, South, Southeast, West, Midwest, and Northeast regions.

A conference is a "mini-convention" with the youth from your region. A conference offers an opportunity to meet other individuals from your area, make memories with them and form bonds that will last a lifetime. The intimate number of people that come also provide a chance to discuss topics much more fully. This year, each of the conferences has a theme by which many of the sessions will be geared towards.

Registration has started on www.yja.org. After you have registered, you will receive a confirmation notice of your application. We encourage everyone that would like to attend to register early because spots are limited in many of the conferences. The Regional Fest website has specific information about each conference, contact information, transportation, and is updated regularly. Please visit www.yja.org for more information.

To contact the Regional Coordinators, please e-mail us at rc6@yja.org.

HOW JAINISM WORKS IN THE REAL WORLD

Midwest Regional Conference

Place: Jain Center of Chicago, Bartlett, IL

Date: January 17th – 19th, 2002

Price: \$ 20

JAINISM VS. MODERN SCIENCE

South Regional Conference

Place: Jain Center of Houston,
Houston, TX

Date: November 29th-December 5, 2002

Price: \$15

THE DUAL IDENTITY CRISIS: PHILOSOPHY VS. SCIENCE

Southeast Regional Conference

Place: Holiday Inn Select, Atlanta, GA.

Date: January 17th – 19th, 2002

Price: \$65

AHIMSA UNEDITED

Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

Place: Best Western Easton Inn, Easton, PA

Date: December 21st – 23rd, 2002

Price: \$55

DIVERSITY AND THE JAIN WAY

Northeast Regional Conference

Place: Holiday Inn Select, Toronto, ONT

Date: December 21st - 23rd, 2002

Price: \$100

DESTINATION: MOKSHA

West Regional Conference

Place: Ramada Inn, Anaheim, CA

Date: December 20th – 22nd, 2002

Price: \$50



Mahavir Swami Coins

In April 2002, the Government of India began circulation of 5 Rupee Coins honoring the 2600th Janma Kalyanak of Mahavirswami. The Young Jains of America was able to get a limited number of those coins and are selling them for a donation of \$3.00. Please contact Arpan Shah at arpan.shah@yja.org to purchase these coins.



Different Sect's Perspective on a Women Roles in Jainism

By Dipa Talati

“One of the most striking features of Jainism is its recognition of women as legitimate soteriological agents in its fourfold division of society, into *sadhus*, *sadhvis*, *shraviks*, and *shravikas*.¹” Even though Jainism as a religion recognizes women, their role in the two main sects is vastly different. A woman's role has been one of the major dividing factors between the two sects of Jains. In the Digambar tradition, a women's role is more inferior to them men than in the Svetambara tradition.

Attaining salvation, *moksha*, is the highest goal of the Jain religion. According to the Digambar tradition, a woman cannot attain *moksha* because their souls do not manifest that pure transformation or “perfect being” by the fact that she has an impure body. Digambers maintain that ascetic nudity is precondition for the path of liberation. A woman's requirement for clothes shows that they can never be free from the emotions of shame and guilt from their naked bodies. Therefore women will always be trapped in their femaleness and be able to overcome it.

In the Svetambara tradition, the monks wear only white clothes and face masks to avoid killing or harming any tiny living beings. In this situation, the naked body does not come into play. Women can attain *moksha* in the Svetambara tradition. However, in both of the traditions there is a hierarchal order between the monks and nuns. The nuns are expected to show deference to the monks and even the most senior nun is must be submissive to the most junior monk.

Even though Jainism recognizes women ascetics, their role is seen as inferior to the males. In the two different sects, the Digambar tradition has more of a restriction upon the women than the Svetambara.

¹ Sethi, Manisha. “Caught in the Wheel: Women and Salvation in Indian Religions” *Manushi*, Issue 119.

Become a Donor for YJA - Help out a great cause

Jai Jinendra,

For the past eleven years, Young Jains of America has been “promoting and spreading Jainism through the youth.” With over four thousand members, YJA continually strives to build the future Jain leaders of tomorrow. But to continue all this, we need your help. With the support of generous individuals like you, the YJA Executive Board is able to make our dreams become a reality. In July, nearly 1000 Jain youth were able to *Walk the Path of Jainism* at our 5th Biennial Convention. Attendees were able to listen to the inspirational words of Gurudev Chitrabhanuji, Satish Kumar, and Sadhviji Shilapaji.

YJA has made several plans to further its impact during this year:

- Organize six Regional Conferences to build greater bonds and unity amongst youth
- Expand www.yja.org into a one-stop shop for Jains and those interested in Jain philosophies
- Build houses for those less fortunate with Habitat for Humanity
- Begin the preparations for YJA Convention 2004
- Sending youth with Veeryatan to assist the earthquake-affected site of Bhuj

We have set up seven donor levels, which we hope you will become a part of. Please help us out in practicing Jainism by becoming a patron donor.

Please make checks payable to **Young Jains of America** and mail it to:

Arpan Shah
3110 Pablo Picasso Dr.
Sugar Land, TX 77479

YJA would like to Thank our Supporters!

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Nitin and Anjana Sheth (NY)

Jain Adhyatma Academy of North America

Donor Levels Begin at \$51, please contact Arpan Shah for more information at Arpan.Shah@yja.org.

Thanks for your support!

With 9/11 and the numerous attacks that have been occurring in the name of one religion or the other, the question arises:

By Amar

How must we, as Jains, respond to War? Salgia

Historically the idea of "nonviolence" originated with Jainism, which is not a protest or offshoot of any other creed (Vedism, Brahmanism, Hinduism or any other). For Jains, nonviolence or Ahimsa applies to all living creatures and is to be practiced through every one of a person's faculties of thought, speech and physical activity. All living beings have eternal souls, and all souls are independent, individual and spiritually equivalent to one another. All souls have the same inherent attributes of infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite happiness and infinite will power.

If one understands the universe in this way, and sees other living beings as animated by individual souls that are eternal, independent, spiritually equal, and characterized by infinite knowledge, perception and happiness, then living in a way that respects and honors their lives and their individual free wills comes naturally.

Jains are taught to avoid bringing harm to the living beings of the world in all of three ways: (1) by not doing harm by oneself, (2) by not having others commit acts of violence, and (3) by not giving consent or approval to the violence done by others. Lay Jains, both men and women, must strive to live their lives in a way that is responsible to the duties pertaining to family, livelihood, and citizenship, while striving - in every minute way - to do only a BARE MINIMUM amount of harm to living things, no matter how simple or complex they are. One major expression of this commitment to living a life of doing only bare minimum violence in order to survive is the Jain dedication to a very strict vegetarian diet. Plants have only 1 physical sense (touch) and are believed to experience much less pain and torment than beings with more senses, such as animals and humans. In Jainism it is very thoroughly recognized that in real life we must commit some violence in order to survive. Of course, eating even plants is harming and killing the plants we eat.

"... WHILE VIOLENCE IS UNAVOIDABLE, WE CAN AND MUST DO OUR VERY BEST TO MINIMIZE IT"

Breathing, blinking our eyes, and digesting food are also activities that harm tiny bacteria. (For thousands of years Jains have clearly understood the existence of microorganisms, long before the invention of the microscope.)

However, just because it is difficult to avoid these inherently violent activities doesn't mean that we are exempt from the spiritual consequences of doing them. In Jainism, from the purely spiritual standpoint, all killing is 100% wrong, 100% of the time. For every act of violence one does - whether knowingly or unknowingly, and be it in a person's thoughts, speech or bodily conduct - negative karmic matter gets bonded to the soul and brings more delusion to the individual responsible for the action. Following Jainism is, among other things, about being as minutely vigilant and aware of our thoughts and actions so that we are able to control of ourselves.

So, while violence is unavoidable, we can and must do our very best to minimize it. For example, killing and eating one-sensed plants is bad, but killing and eating multi-sensed animals is much worse. For a Jain the choice of lifestyle is obvious.

As a layperson, being a citizen of a nation also has responsibilities. The Jain tradition has always recognized that one of those responsibilities is supporting law and order and the nation's defenses. One cannot live to serve and protect others, care for family and promote good virtues, or live to purify one's soul, if one is either dead or living in fear of death due to an outside assailant. For this reason, the Jain acharyas of centuries ago listed military service (*asi*) as one of the acceptable careers for Jains. A nation's military actions should always be defensive, and not offensive in the sense of seeking to wantonly hurt or steal things from other people.

In the history of Jainism, Jains have been fearless leaders and soldiers who were known for their chivalry and commitment to justice and fairness. When necessary they have indeed wielded the military option to attain moral objectives in this violent world in which we live.



SALLEKHANA - WHAT IS IT?

I've heard about Jain people starving themselves to death. What is the story behind this?

Sallekhana is known as a religious death in Jainism. It does involve a gradual process of the cessation of consumption of food. However, it is a very sacred and controlled process; it must be performed by a person who truly understands central principles and by one who has committed to certain vows.

The following is a description of *sallekhana* from Paul Dundas:

In light of the general Indian belief that the last moment of life has a decisive bearing on the state of an individual's next birth and the specifically Jain teaching about the possibility of the destruction of karma through gradual withdrawal from mental and physical activity, it is hardly surprising that Jainism views the ideal mode of death as being a form of highly controlled wasting away through fasting. This process is known as *sallekhana*, in which the central austerity of cutting down the consumption of food is taken to its logical conclusion so that the body is 'scoured out' (*sallikhita*) of its negative factors and the mind can focus solely upon spiritual matters as death approaches.

Jain writers have always been adamant that the voluntary death of *sallekhana*, which is exclusively directed towards the soul and must be performed with a sacred formula on one's lips (MA 94), is in no way equivalent to an act of suicide and they contrast it with various forms of the 'fool's death', types of suicide carried out through despair or inadequacy which involve violence to one's body. *Sallekhana* cannot be suicide, Akalanka argued, because it would have to involve the passions, as well as the probable use of poisons or weapons (TSRV p. 550).

Sallekhana (also called *samthara*, 'death-bed', its designation among Shvetambaras today), is presented as requiring the controlling involvement of a teacher as presiding guide during the whole process and, furthermore, as being a form of death accessible to lay people.

Dundas, The Jains. Pg. 155-6.

For more Frequently asked Questions about Jainism, go to www.yja.org/faq.html



Veerayatan is an international organization established over 29 years ago. 10 YJA members in Bhuj, India, from Dec. 25 - Jan.10 will volunteer with the Veerayatan organization and help those affected by the Gujarat Earthquake. They will teach or perform administrative tasks during the day, learning Gujarati, Hindi, or Sanskrit at night.

They will be making a tremendous difference in the life of an orphan. They are truly putting 'compassion in action.' Veerayatan will provide room and board and all meals free of charge. Veerayatan staff escorts volunteers through all transportation.

All spots in our program have been filled; we are very proud of this accomplishment. If you are interested, please look for announcements for next December.

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board@yja.org | www.yja.org

Young Jains of America c/o
Arpan R. Shah
1 Forest Park Lane
Ithaca, NY 14850