

Jain Study Center
of North Carolina (Raleigh)

*celebrating our
40th anniversary*



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Published and Distributed by:

Jain Study Center Of North Carolina (JSCNC)

PO Box 146

Morrisville, NC 27560

Email: jscnc101@gmail.com **Website:** <https://jscnc.org/>

A non-profit, tax-exempt, religious organization EIN/Tax ID: 56-1305715

**eSouvenir was inaugurated by Pravin and Arti Shah at the virtual JSCNC Annual Meet
on December 20, 2020]**

**Please provide us with your comments and suggestions.
Use the above information for the communication.**

NAVAKAR MANTRA

णमो अरिहंताणं	Namo Arihantanam	I bow down to Arihanta
णमो सिद्धाणं	Namo Siddhanam	I bow down to Siddha
णमो आयरियाणं	Namo Ayriyanam	I bow down to Acharya
णमो उवज्झायाणं	Namo Uvajjhayanam	I bow down to Upadhyaya
णमो लोए सव्व साहूणं	Namo Loe Savva-sahunam	I bow down to Sadhu and Sadhvi
एसो पंच णमोक्कारो	Eso Panch Namokaro	These five bowing downs
सव्व पावप्पणासणो	Savva-pavappanasano	Destroy all the sins
मंगला णं च सव्वेसिं	Manglananch Savvesim	Amongst all that is auspicious
पढमं हवई मंगलं	Padhamam Havei Mangalam	This Navakar Mantra is the foremost

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PREFACE

Jain Study Center of North Carolina is celebrating its 40th anniversary. This eSouvenir book is a memorable and superb collection of unvarnished expressions of individuals' own growth expressed during their spiritual journey together within the Jain Study Center of North Carolina, Raleigh (**JSCNC**).

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that we present the thoughts, ideas and heartfelt observations of experienced writers and those less so. While all ideas presented here may not necessarily represent the teachings of the Jain Study Center, they are presented basically in their original form as a tribute to the individuals expressing them. Thoughts and perceptions of our adults and youth, expressed in this eSouvenir instill a sense of pride in all of us for the depth and strength of their beliefs. The children, youth, and adults love **JSCNC** and find their experiences transformative.

The articles in this eSouvenir range from how we celebrate Jain events, follow Jain practices, and implement concepts of Jainism. In addition, we have many pictorial memories that capture the history of the center. Every effort has been made to capture and present accurate information. If there is any error, it is not intentional, and we seek your forgiveness.

These articles are sure to tantalize your curiosity and perhaps will drive you to this eSouvenir frequently. We wish to thank all the members and contributors for their support in creating this eSouvenir. Enjoy and cherish this memorable 40th Anniversary eSouvenir.

eSouvenir Committee

*Jagdish M. Shah
Madhuker A. Mehta
Rajan R. Chheda
Ritesh J. Salot*

*Dr. Indu M. Varia
Dr. Mahesh A. Varia
Rekha L. Banker*

DEDICATION TO PANDIT SHRI DHIRAJLAL MEHTA

Jain Study Center of North Carolina dedicates this 40th Anniversary eSouvenir to the memory of Panditji.



(1933-2020)

Pandit Dhirajlal Mehta or Panditji as we would call him with respect and reverence will be greatly missed by our Center.

Panditji first visited our Center in 1991. Our founder member Pravin Shah organized Panditji's first and many subsequent annual visits to USA. Pravinbhai and Artiben were the host and many of Panditji's discourses were held at their home. Ever since then over the past 25 years he always visited our Center during his annual visits to the USA and gave us discourses on the fundamental and deeper aspects of Jainism. Center members looked forward to Panditji's Swadhyayas and Shibirs. His visits and Swadhyayas would be over several days, at times twice per day, at times with individual sessions, and always teaching his vast knowledge of Jainism with great clarity, simplicity, and patience.

Pravinbhai introduced Panditji to the Jain organizations throughout USA. The most eminent Swadhyakar for the Sanghs in America, Panditji- Shri Dhirajlal Dahyabhai Mehta - was a prolific writer on Jainism. Every year during his stay in America, he would write and publish a new book. In all, he wrote over 40 books on difficult subjects like Karma Granth (6 volumes), Ratnakaravtarika (3 volumes), Gandharvaad, Yogvishika, Yogshatak, Yog Drashti Sammuchaya, Tatvarth Sutra, and a Jain Dictionary.

Panditji's Gujarati book *Jain Dharm-na Maulik Siddhanto* (Fundamental Principles of Jainism) is an amazing introduction to the basics of Jainism. It begins with a detailed meaning of Namokar Mantra, notes the attributes of the *panch-paramsehthi* and goes on to explain other Jain sutras. This book has a wonderful introduction to *Nav Tattva* from *Tattvarth Sutra*. The book encompasses the topics of 14 *Gunasthanaks*, *Karma*, and *Anekantvaad*.

Panditji will be remembered for the ability to explain the most complex Jain subjects in a simple, easy to understand language. During the Coronavirus lockdown, he continued providing Swadhyays on the web. Though not feeling well before his passing away, he told his son that he needed to resume writing his upcoming book - 100 Gathanu Stavan. A lifelong devotion to spreading the knowledge of Jain Dharma practiced unto his last breath!

Hundreds of Jains in America learned many Jain subjects from him over the many years of his visits to various Sanghs. He was invited speaker at JAINA and JAANA conventions. Apart from USA and India, he gave *Pravachans* in Belgium, Canada, Dubai, Kenya, Singapore, and UK. In all his international travels, he dressed in his trademark white kurta, white dhoti, and the traditional black hat.

Panditji studied at the Shri Yashovijayji Jain Sanskrit Pathshala under Pandit Pokhrakji and Pandit Chandrashekhar Jha. He mastered Sanskrit and Prakrit, the languages of ancient scriptures. For the last 30 years, he had been teaching Sadhus and Sadhvis in Surat and Ahmedabad seven hours a day. Panditji was frequently invited to speak at Shri Rakeshbhai Zaveri's Dharampur Ashram of Shrimad Rajchandraji. He was the head of All India Pathshala Teachers Association for many years. He was instrumental in creating scores of Pathshala teachers keeping tradition of Jain Pathshala teaching and Panditji's legacy alive.

We respectfully dedicate our Center's 40th Anniversary eSouvenir to Panditji. We will cherish his teachings, his memories, his simplicity, and are grateful for sharing his knowledge of Jainism with all of us.

** Adapted and modified from JAINA newsletter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jai Jinendra Members,

First, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to you all for continuing support to our society.

2020 is a special year for **JSCNC** – a year to celebrate all the accomplishments in our 40-year history of the society that serves as the bedrock for the Jain community in Greater Raleigh. A Milestone like this is a time to reflect upon our accomplishments over the past four decades and a time to look ahead to where we wish to go from here together.

JSCNC has shown excellence by doing necessary and critical work that was only possible by the collective dedication and cooperation of its esteemed members, along with our partnership and collaboration with HSNL, local religious organizations, and other organization across the globe.



The founders of **JSCNC** has set the tone at the beginning. Today, we are rich in wisdom and strong in our belief in our society because of our past leaders. Creating the right initiatives is the key for the pursuit of excellence and growth of **JSCNC**. Every President and executive committee have contributed towards the growth of **JSCNC**. They identified the need of our society and moved us forward. Today's **JSCNC** is the culmination of their devotion and contributions. I would like to thank our past presidents for their vision and due diligence to bring us to this point.

Considering the unique formation of our community, it is my belief that connecting youth and seniors is extremely beneficial in strengthening our community. Seniors have a wealth of knowledge to share, and the youth can contribute with their technology skills, new ideas and enthusiasm. We should continue to focus towards building values and creating innovative methods to inspire, empower and equip our youth towards principles of Jainism. I want to encourage all of you to continue to reflect on our shared responsibilities to the society at the grassroots level, and together let us achieve the new heights.

I consider myself blessed to have had the honor of serving as the President of **JSCNC** for the past two years (2019-2020). The first few weeks as a president had been a whirlwind. However, at the same time, I was excited to learn, to understand and to be transformed. As a result, and based on appreciation of the members, I can proudly say that in last few years **JSCNC**'s light shone exceedingly bright, which makes it an honor for me to be part of this wonderful journey.

I see **JSCNC** is a place where we can articulate and examine our values, a place where we can find companions in being accountable to our highest selves. I am sure we all have our personal stories and have collective stories of our society.

COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges to many of our doorsteps. Our entire community has had to change its way of working, collaborating, and learning given the evolving circumstances. Thank you for your patience and continued commitment and love for **JSCNC** as we baby-step our way through this year and out of this pandemic together.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow committee members: Rajan Chheda, our Vice President; Pratyush Mehta, our Treasurer; Kalpesh Parekh, our Secretary; Shashin Chheda, our Food Coordinator; Sejal Shah, our Pathshala Director; Ketan Kuruwa, our Youth Director; and especially Bhairav Shah, our board advisor.

I look forward to many more years of exciting endeavors of **JSCNC** and wish you all a very happy 40th Anniversary.

Sincerely,



Ritesh Salot
President

MESSAGES FROM LEADERS

REMEMBERING ACHARYA SUSHIL MUNIJI AND GURUDEV CHITRABHANUJI

From the inception, **JSCNC** has been blessed with a long association with Acharya Sushil Muni (Guruji) and Gurudev Chitrabhanu. They graced us with their presence, and as spiritual leaders enriched our understanding of Jainism. They were both visionaries who took the bold step (Gurudev in 1970, Guruji in 1974) of travelling to the USA that the ancient Jain tradition prohibited monks from going abroad or using conveyances. They were instrumental in teaching the spirituality of Jainism to the immigrant Jain communities throughout North America. Amongst their many lasting legacies, Guruji and Gurudev dedicated themselves to Ahimsa and were also instrumental in founding JAINA.

ACHARYA SUSHIL MUNIJI

Acharya Sushil Muni (respectfully known as Guruji) took Diksha at the age of 15, mastered classical Indian philosophies, dedicated himself to Ahimsa and Harmony, and resolving civil strife. In 1982, Guruji inspired the leaders of eight nations to submit a memorandum for peace through nonviolence to the Secretary General of the United Nations. Siddhachalam, his main ashram in New Jersey is the first Jain pilgrimage place in USA. (<https://www.siddhachalam.org/>)



Guruji visited **JSCNC** in 1980, and in 1982 graced our first Jain Camp as the spiritual leader. In 1986, he attended the inauguration of HSNK Temple and sthapana of Mahavir Swami murti. **JSCNC** has been graced by Guruji's divine presence on all these memorable occasions. We are thankful for his wisdom, teaching and guidance.

GURUDEV CHITRABHANUJI

Gurudev's life has been guided by a quest for the spiritual truth and the eternal philosophy of Reverence for all Life (Ahimsa) and Relativity in Thinking (Anekantvaad). He addressed the United Nations on Ahimsa and authored many books to spread his message. (<https://gurudevchitrabhanu.org/>)



He helped many come closer to their own divine nature through meditation by overcoming their inner enemies (Anger, Ego, Deceit, Greed). In 1973, he founded the Jain Meditation International Center in New York. Gurudev visited JSCNC and benefitted us with his wisdom and discourses. We are thankful for his lifelong impact on Jainism in pursuit of Ahimsa and his everlasting and universal composition Maitri Bhaav Nu Pavitra Zarnu (<https://www.servicespace.org/blog/view.php?id=15558>) that we recite at monthly meetings.

ACHARYA CHANDANASHRIJI

"Blessings from Acharyaji Chandanajishriji"

June 21, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters of JSCNC,

I, Sadhvi Sanghamitraji, am pleased to address this message on behalf of Param Pujya Acharya Chandanashriji to you on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of JSCNC!!!

In warmly blessing each of you, I would like to convey to all the members of this meritorious Society, which offer a precious contribution to the spiritual and social, all the encompassing needs of this society without any distinction.

All of you have gladly and enthusiastically participated in countless benevolent activities to help and support humanity. Along with many charitable organizations, your tremendous love and warm-hearted support to VEERAYATAN has been phenomenal.

I gladly take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the generous work that your Study Center carries out with great efforts and encourage you to continue serving all with competence and dedication.

Lord Mahavir, the true Giver of every good, may continue to accompany and bless you as he has in the past 40 years.

I assure you of my prayers for everyone's good physical and emotional health and affectionately impart my Blessing to all the respective Religious families.

From Veerayatan , 21 June 2020
ACHARYA CHANDANASHRIJI



VEERAYATAN, Rajgir, District Nalanda, Bihar - 803 116, India
Email- jay@veerayatan.org, Mobil: +919819981518

JAIN STUDY
CENTER
OF
NORTH
CAROLINA
(JSCNC)



Heartfelt blessings...

*-Rashtrasant Param Gurudev
Shree Namramuni Maharaj Saheb*

Devanupriya

Shri Riteshbhai and all the members,

Your sincere efforts of staying in a foreign land and yet, giving birth to the values of Jainism in Jain and non-Jain hearts alike for 40 long years is truly commendable.

In today's 5th era, the effort of spreading Prabhu's message is actually equivalent to taking forward Prabhu's legacy, and increasing his lifespan in today's day and age. Truly each of you have been honouring this duty with staunch faith and enthusiasm.

I only wish that your efforts grow and become stronger with every passing day, and may you attain success at every step.

I express my heartfelt blessings that may Prabhu's guiding principles of universal peace and harmony be the strength of your institution.

May your devotion towards this mission keep growing every moment.

ॐ नमः

ॐ नमः



Shrimad Rajchandra Mission
Dharampur



To,
Mr Ritesh Salot,
President,
The Jain Study Center of North Carolina,

My heartiest congratulations to all of you for completing forty years of living and growing together as one JSCNC family. Together you have endeavoured to understand the Jain religion – its philosophy, rituals and literature, through pathshala and various swadhyay sessions for youth and adults.

On the auspicious occasion of Paryushan, I pray to Bhagwan Mahavira that, may all continue to live inspired by Bhagwan's life and teachings. May all cultivate the wisdom and strength to translate Bhagwan's teachings in every thought, word and deed so that we are Jains not just by birth but by belief too. May this Paryushan remind us that Jainism is an attitude of love and forgiveness, which is the best gift we can give to ourselves and others. May we walk the path of compassion and contribute towards the well-being of the world.

Love and Blessings,

Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai

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JAINA PRESIDENT - MAHESH WADHER



"To Preserve and Share Jain Philosophy and Way of Life"

Federation of Jain Associations in North America

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(2019-2021)

July 20, 2020

Mr. Ritesh Salot,
President,
Jain Study Center of North Carolina,

Jai Jinendra,

I wish to extend my greetings and best wishes to you and the entire Jain Study Center of North Carolina as you celebrate the 40th anniversary of your services to the Jain families around the Triangle area to fulfil the spiritual, cultural, and social needs of the community.

I know that the name of your society is " Jain Study Center of North Carolina " but you are truly the educator of all the USA. In fact, the whole world has benefited from your educational activities. Your center has pioneered so many projects. In 1991, 30 years ago before the advent of the internet, your center started JAIN BBS and eventually gave the world JAIN e-library, uniform Pathshala curriculum, JAB, and Pathshala teachers conventions. Your center has been the center of Jain education for thousands of kids in North America.

JAINA is proud of your membership and as President, on behalf of 150,000 Jains of North America, I salute your society and send greetings to your members.

Sincerely yours,

Mahesh Wadher
President,

Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)

Founded 1981, UN NGO, a Non-Profit Religious organization (501) (c) (3) EI # 54 -1280028
Registered Address: 722 Main Street, Milpitas, CA 95035

BLESSINGS FROM SHARMA FAMILY (HSNC)

DR. GANGADHAR SHARMA

To All Devotees,

The Hindu Society of North Carolina was formed in September 1976. Later Pravin Shah approached us that they are making a Jain Society of North Carolina and we would like to work together. Sushil Muniji inaugurated Hindu temple of North Carolina and blessed the society.

HSNC Temple in Morrisville was built in December 1986. Since then both societies are working together very nicely. Every week Jain society people come to worship Mahavir Swami and every 3rd Sunday they have their Monthly Meeting in HSNC temple.

My Sincere blessing to each and everyone!!!
“Uncle Ji”

MRS. SAROJ SHARMA

To All Devotees,

Hindu society and Jain society are working together from last 40 years. Even though ups and down comes or time clash come, but we resolve that with understanding. This is religious beauty that we work together respecting each other.

I am really appreciative and thankful to Pravin Shah and Entire Jain Society.

God Bless You All!!!
“Aunty Ji”



THE HINDU SOCIETY OF NORTH CAROLINA

309 Aviation Parkway, Morrisville NC 27560

Ph. 919-481-2574 Web: www.hsnconline.org

Jai Jinendra,

Let me start with congratulating **Jain Study Center of North Carolina (JSCNC)** on their 40th Anniversary. It is one of the most vibrant Organization with spiritual, cultural, social and community activities. I have been working at HSNC for last 20+ years and I have seen JSCNC team over the years working very actively.

JSCNC is one of those organizations which uses HSNC facilities very pragmatically. Their Sunday sessions are always well organized, informative and disciplined. What I like most is about the representation and participation by youth members connecting well with their Senior members. I have attended the Mahavir Jayanti celebration multiple times and it is one of the most organized and well attended events at HSNC. We are so proud and honored to have JSCNC at HSNC.

I am always inspired by JSCNC leaders like Pravin bhai, Harshad Uncle & Sejpal Uncle. These are also HSNC advisors and have supported and been part of HSNC administration.

This year we are going through very challenging times because of the Covid-19 pandemic. HSNC started the **Food for Wake County and Homeless Shelter Program** and immediately JSCNC jumped on board to participate and provided valuable support and sponsorship for multiple Saturdays. We are indeed thankful to JSCNC for their support. In fact, we came to know from the Wake County administration about JSCNC's collaboration with the Interfaith Organization for their farm Produce program.

We all know that one day there is going to be "**Jain Center**" in RTP. **We at HSNC would like to work with JSCNC to build that center in the beautiful HSNC campus which is located in the heart of RTP.** Let us all work together to build "**Jain Center**" at HSNC campus. **Such a center will be a blessing to the Community.** In the meantime, we want to continue our support to JSCNC and for their activities / programs at HSNC. We are also open for new ways of collaboration especially with your **youth wing** hence please bring up your suggestions and ideas.

I appeal to the JSCNC community to be safe & follow CDC guidelines. We request almighty Uttam Kshama (forgiveness) and let us all pray to come out of this pandemic.

Thank you,

Manoj Pandya
HSNCPresident@hsnconline.org

JAI JINENDRA

**Jain Sangh of Fayetteville would like to
Congratulate Jain Study Center of North Carolina
(JSCNC) on 40Th Anniversary Celebration.**



Jain Sangh of Fayetteville Appreciates JSCNC Support during

BHAGVAN SHREE MAHAVIR PRATISHTHA.

BEST WISHES TO JSCNC.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2020



From left:

Shashin Chheda
Food Co-Ordinator

Ketan Kuruwa
Youth Co-Ordinator

Sejal Shah
Pathshala Director

Ritesh Salot
President

Kalpesh Parekh
Secretary

Rajan Chheda
Vice President

Pratyush Mehta
Treasurer

JSCNC FOUNDING MEMBERS

The first meetings were held in 1979. **JSCNC** was registered with IRS as a tax-exempt organization in 1981.

We have included the names of the members who were participating at that time.

- ❖ Arti and Pravin Shah
- ❖ Bina and Arvind Shah
- ❖ Chetana and Ramesh Fofaria
- ❖ Indu and Mahesh Varia
- ❖ Indu and Prem Gangwal
- ❖ Madhu and Santosh Gangwal
- ❖ Manorama and Suresh Jain
- ❖ Nirupama and Bipin Shah
- ❖ Nisha and Harshad Padia
- ❖ Pina and Prakash Shah
- ❖ Rekha and Lalit Banker
- ❖ Rekha and Sudesh Jain
- ❖ Renu and Khushal Mehta
- ❖ Sheela and Sagar Jain
- ❖ Sumitra and Sampat Jain
- ❖ Tarun Desai
- ❖ Varsha and Vijay Rao

JSCNC'S PRESIDENTS AND VICEPRESIDENTS

Year	President	Vice President
1979 - 1980	Committee	Committee
1981 - 1983	Ramesh Fofaria	Pravin Shah
1984	Khushal Mehta	Bipin Shah
1985	Lalit Banker	Jagdish Shah
1986	Mahesh Varia	Rajendra Mehta
1987	Sampat Jain	Jagdish Shah
1988 - 1989	Pravin Shah	Natvar Shah
1990	Indu Varia	Vasant doshi
1991	Pravin Shah	Pratyush Mehta
1992	Pratyush Mehta	Pravin Shah
1993 - 1995	Pravin Shah	Jagdish Shah
1996	Rajen Doshi	Jagdish Shah
1997	Pravin Shah	Jagdish Shah
1998	Ramesh Fofaria	Pratyush Mehta
1999	Nisha Padia	Arvind Shah
2000	Madhuker Mehta	Sunil Jain
2001	Rekha Banker	Jagdish Shah
2002	Kamlesh Shah	Pratyush Mehta
2003	Lalit Banker	Pratyush Mehta
2004	Lalit Banker	Arvind Shah
2005 - 2006	Paresh Gondalia	Arvind Shah
2007	Jagdish Shah	Sapna Banker
2008	Kirit Shah	Harshad Shah
2009	Harshad Varia	Yogesh Sanghvi
2010	Rekha Banker	Pratyush Mehta
2011	Pravin Shah	Rekha Banker
2012	Kamlesh Shah	Rekha Banker
2013	Pratyush Mehta	Neha Mehta
2014	Anand Shah	Neha Mehta
2015	Anand Shah	Pritesh Shah
2016	Pritesh Shah	Vaishali Shah
2017	Bhairav Shah	Pritesh Shah
2018	Bhairav Shah	Minal Shah
2019	Ritesh Salot	Shashin Chheda
2020	Ritesh Salot	Rajan Chheda

Detailed Committee List: <http://jscnc.org/past-committees/>

HONORING PRAVIN K. SHAH

Jain Study Center of North Carolina (**JSCNC**) pays tribute to Mr. Pravin Shah, founder member of **JSCNC** and recognizes his numerous outstanding contributions not only to **JSCNC** but also to JAINA, Jainism education for youth and adults, and his compassion for animal life.

He is a Jain scholar, educator, innovator, organizer, and pioneer in adapting Internet technology in Jainism. He has accomplished this with the ongoing support of his wife Arti Shah, daughters Shilpa and Shweta, colleagues, and friends worldwide. His achievements have been recognized with local, national and international awards.

His lifelong goal of expounding and explaining Jainism to the contemporary world is successfully accomplished by his traditional, technological and innovative approaches. In this respect he does extensive research of shastras, discusses challenging questions with Jain Acharyas, Maharaj Sahebs, and scholars for guidance.



Following is a brief and not necessarily a comprehensive summary of his amazing local, national, and international accomplishments and contributions.

Jain eLibrary (<https://jainelibrary.org/>)

Jain eLibrary was established by Pravin Shah in 2008. This eLibrary is a most innovative, outstanding, and amazing accomplishment by Pravin Shah that makes vast amounts of Jainism and related information in digital format readily and freely available all over the world through internet access.

It is a non-commercial website with free registration where the registered users can freely download the available Jainism information. The website is an immense online collection of Jain scriptures, Jain manuscripts, Jain dictionary, Jain encyclopedia, Jain articles, Jain magazines, and ancient and contemporary Jain books in English, Hindi, Gujarati, and other languages. The eLibrary is a growing resource of Jainism information with constant additions of ancient and contemporary collections.

The Jain eLibrary contains Shvetāmbar Āgams, Digambar Shastras, Four Anuyoga, Commentary literature, Prakrit and Sanskrit literature, and ancient and modern literature representing all sects of Jainism. It also includes the literature of various Jain sects. Catalogues of Jain manuscripts of various Jain libraries add to the diversity of this collection.

As of October 2020, the eLibrary has over 20,600 books, Agams, magazines, and manuscripts, 1300 audio/video files, 5200 articles, and 65,000 registered users from 165 countries. It has had over 2.4 million visits and over a million files downloaded!

Contributions to JSCNC

Pravin Shah is not only the founder member of **JSCNC** but also its pillar and guiding light.

- President of **JSCNC** in its formative years and on many subsequent occasions. ([Presidents List](#))
- Pathshala teacher to senior high school students in earlier years
- Religious Adviser for Visiting Scholars Committee. Arranged scholar visits from India and hosted them at his home
- Speaker on Jainism topics at **JSCNC** monthly meetings on numerous occasions. ([Meeting Speakers](#))
- Implemented major changes such as the Saturday-to-Saturday Paryushan observance, English Pratikraman
- Advocate of vegan lifestyle and prevention of cruelty to animals
- Encouraged **JSCNC** youth to get involved in humanitarian activities nationally and internationally
- Conducting weekly Jain Swadhyayas at his home and on WEBEX
- Adviser and guide for **JSCNC** Pathshala
- Lifetime Achievement Award of **JSCNC**

Contributions to JAINA

Mr. Pravin Shah has been actively involved in JAINA since its inception and regularly at the JAINA biannual conventions.

- JAINA Ratna Award, 1999
- JAINA Director (**JSCNC**) since 1985
- Member, JAINA Education Committee since 1991
- Chair, JAINA Education Committee since 2001
- Advisor to JAINA YJA and YJP organizations
- Organizer, JAINA Academic Bowl at JAINA Conventions
- Sponsored **JSCNC** member for JAINA Adult Awards (Ramesh Fofaria, Mahesh Varia, Madhuker Mehta)
- Sponsored **JSCNC** members for JAINA Youth Awards (Kamlesh Shah, Parul Shah, Surabhi Shah, Shweta Shah, Nisha Varia, Shilpa Shah, Ameet Shah, Dina Mehta)

Contributions to JAIN Education

- As a Chairperson of JAINA Education Committee, he has published a complete set of JAINA Pathshala Educational Material covering elementary level to college level education. The material is compiled by committee members including books by individuals. This includes Pathshala books for Level 1-4 Students.
 - Jain Activity Book (JES 101)
 - Basics of Jainism (JES102)
 - Jain Alphabet Book (JES 103)
 - Jain Skit Book (JES 104)
 - Being a Jain 24/7 – Journey towards a Happy and Peaceful Life (JES105)
 - My Jain Values Journal (JES106)

- Jain Story Book (JES 202)
- First Step to Jainism (JES 203)
- Workbook of First Step of Jainism (JES203Q)
- Jain Philosophy and Practice (JES 401& JES 911)
- Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) Manual (JES 904)
- He has also prepared / revised reference books on Jainism (JES 901), World Religion Book (JES911), Book of Compassion (JES 921) and English Pratikraman
- More than 4000 Pathshala students across North America use this course material.
- Conducts national JAINA Pathshala Teachers' Workshops.
- Conducts national Jain Workshops encompassing a broad range of Jainism topics for adults.

Contribution to Various Interfaith Organizations

- Representing Jainism since 1991 in the Pluralism Project Established by Diana L. Eck at Harvard University in 1991, the Pluralism Project studies and interprets religious diversity and interfaith relations in the United
- Representing Jainism in Uberoi Foundation of Dharmic traditions consisting Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism since 2008
- Triangle Interfaith Alliance (TIA) Director, representing Jainism since 2002
- Distributed more than 25000 Essence of World Religions books in various Interfaith conferences along with 10,000 copies of Jainism book
- Delivered several speeches on Jainism to local Churches, Mosques, Synagogues, University groups

Contributions Internationally and Internet Innovations

- Presented Jainism related papers at all the six Parliament of World Religions Conferences from 1993 to 2018
- Initiated Jain Bulletin Board Service, a computer-based Jainism information program in the 1990's that was forerunner of the Jain eLibrary
- Established Jain Pathshala Teachers' Google Group and recently WhatsApp group
- Initiated [Jainism Blog](#) that discusses modern issues from Jainism perspective
- Twice weekly Jainism webinars on Internet
- Jainism presentations on YouTube
- Implemented Jain Quantum, a Jain literature search engine for spiritual seekers and scholars around the world. This will support a "Quantum" unprecedented search capability over the entire Jain eLibrary catalogue for worldwide users to conduct detailed search using text words
- Advocacy of vegan lifestyle and prevention of cruelty to animals. Based in his research and personal visits to dairy farms, he has reported on how dairy products are associated with animal cruelty and damaging effect on environment and advocates avoidance of dairy products in diet and in Jain practices
- Invited speaker on Jainism topics and workshops at various US cities and International centers (Bangkok, Dubai, London, India)

Reference Books, Papers and Lectures Presented

A sample of his books, lectures and presentations on Jain Philosophy, Conduct, Rituals and World Religions are noted below. Additional listings can be found in the Jain eLibrary with search for Pravin K. Shah as an author

- Jainism and Spiritual Awakening (JES 901)
- Essence of World Religions (JES 911)
- The Book of Compassion (JES 921)
- English Pratikraman (JES 931)
- Jain Puja Book (JES 933)
- Jain Sutra Book with English Meaning (JES 941)
- Ashtapad Tirth Booklet (JES 981)
- “Jain Literature” presented at the Parliament of World Religions 1993, Chicago
- “Jainism on the Internet” at the YJA convention 1994, Chicago
- “Comparative Religions” at the YJA convention 1996, San Francisco
- “Fundamentals of Jainism” at the YJP convention 1998, Miami
- “Philosophy of Karma” at Federation of JAINA convention 1997, Toronto
- “Jain workshop” consisting in five lectures on various topics at the Federation of JAINA convention 1999, Philadelphia and
- “Uniqueness of Jain Karma Philosophy” and “Comparison of Eastern and Western Religions”, two papers presented at the Parliament of World Religions 1999, Cape Town, South Africa
- Jain Diet and Food – Holistic approach to health, Environment and Spiritual Life” at JAINA convention 2007

We, at **JSCNC** have benefitted immensely from Pravin Shah’s scholarship, teachings, innovations, and the use of modern technology.

We honor Pravin K. Shah for his lifelong dedication to Jainism, influential teaching, the creation of Jain eLibrary, and congratulate him for these wide-ranging accomplishments.

Thank you Pravinbhai!!

REMEMBERING JSCNC MEMBERS

RAMESH FOFARIA

(1943-2018)

Ramesh Fofaria was a founder member of **JSCNC** who tirelessly contributed in numerous ways not only to the newly formed **JSCNC** but also to the nascent Research Triangle Indian community, the community at large in North Carolina, and the needs in his home country of India. Following is a brief list of his amazing devotion, hard work, public service, accomplishments, and awards.

Awards and Recognitions

- Order of the Long Leaf Pine awarded by North Carolina Governor Mike Easley in 2003. It is the State of North Carolina's most prestigious and the highest award recognizing extraordinary service to the state
- President's Volunteer Service Award from President Barack Obama in 2014
- Wake County Commissioner's Award for volunteer work, RDU International Airport Ambassador, 2008
- JAINA Adult Recognition Award
- Gold Patrol Fund established in his honor by International Association of Alumni of Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya, 2018

Contributions to JSCNC and Jainism

- Helped compile the first Jain Study Folder for children and youth
- Helped compile the first Jain Staven book used at **JSCNC** monthly meetings and other occasions
- Organized the initial overnight Jain Camps
- Advisor for Jain puja and practices
- Held various positions as Secretary, Treasurer, President of IAAMJ for over 15 years, raised over \$800,000 for higher educations of students in India and USA
- Organized Shibirs of Jain Scholars
- Assisted with travel arrangements of Jain scholars from India

Contributions to the Community here and in India

- Organized fundraising for Gujarat earthquake relief, over \$40,000
- Holds the distinction of designing at least one bridge in each of North Carolina's 100 counties
- Brought Bollywood movies and stars in the 1970's including first screening of a Bollywood movie at Rialto in 1969
- Leading voice in the development of Gujarati programs in the 1970's, Indian cultural activities, and temple
- Organized the first TGA Navratri Garba program at Powell Drive Hall with Kirit Parekh
- Assisted families in preserving Indian culture working with hotels and reception halls for weddings and with funeral homes with regard to cremation.

Volunteer Work

- Volunteer work with Triangle Red Cross especially during hurricane evacuations
- With Wake Med Cardiac Rehabilitation, RDU Airport. Habitat for Humanity, Amtrak

LALIT BANKER

(****-2008)

Lalit Banker, founder member of **JSCNC** loved children, loved helping others, and loved volunteering. It was his innate nature to help individuals and be of service to the community as noted below. He contributed greatly to **JSCNC** and left a legacy of protecting the environment as an integral aspect of Jain way of life.

He worked for the US Environmental Protection Agency, and he worked to take his expertise to India also. He got involved in efforts by EPA to work more effectively with India's air pollution and to improve the air quality and health of the people there.

Rekha Banker recalls a memorable story about when Lalit Banker was on his afternoon walk at work with a co-worker and tried to avoid killing an insect while walking. The coworker became vegetarian following this incident and talked about this life-changing event at Jain Camp.

Contributions to JSCNC

- President of **JSCNC** on several occasions
- Liaison for HSNC & **JSCNC**
- Arranged for the monthly Jain meetings to be held in Hindu Bhavan in 2003
- Started an environmental program of ADOPT a highway for **JSCNC**, a stretch of Highway 54 now dedicated to his memory
- **JSCNC** Camp coordinator, now dedicated to his memory as Camp Lalit
- Initiated program where **JSCNC** committee to visit grieving families
- Food table for Jain meetings – concept of 2 teams alternating monthly and simplified the no of items cooked
- Always helped behind the scenes with program direction at MJ and Puja

Awards

- Recognition Award for Notable Contributions, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, US Environmental Protection Agency

Volunteering Work

- Tutored needy children
- Volunteered at Special Olympics to help the handicapped
- Started and implemented the Stack-a plate program to help the environment

- Always picked up trash and emptied trash cans at events and even large parties even if he was the guest
- Always welcomed newcomers to the area and made them feel at ease on their initial visits and offered to help them in any which way if needed
- Always socialized with elderly parents visiting from India and made them laugh
- Visited nursing homes on a regular basis
- Master of Ceremony at many events with his humorous and jolly nature
- Volunteered for Jimmy Valvano's projects
- Walked for various charities
- TGA volunteer at several programs and TGA Committee member
- Played an active part in the Habitat for Humanity TGA project

DR. SAMPAT JAIN

(1936-2017)

Dr. Sampat Raj Jain was a founder member of **JSCNC**, had excellent knowledge of Jainism and well-read in Indian as well as western philosophy systems. He contributed to the discussions at monthly meetings and with Jain scholars with insightful questions.

He was also the founder member of the Triangle Jain Society. He enjoyed leading discussions and mentoring the youth. Ever the teacher, he loved telling stories and sharing wisdom from his life. He greatly loved children in the community.

JSCNC REMEMBERS**

Amritlal Varia – Father of Dr. Mahesh Varia
 Arunbhai Pothiwala – Father of Amit Pothiwala
 Chabilbhai Fofaria – Brother of Ramesh Fofaria
 Hansaben Doshi – Mother of Jyoti Kamesh Shah
 Jyotsnaben Shah – Wife of Harshad Shah
 Pushpaben Bhavsar – Mother of Satish Bhavsar
 Prabhaben Sejjal – Wife of Vasant Sejjal
 Shantilal Mehta – Father of Paresh Mehta

Details: [JSCNC Remembers](#)

(**As provided by members)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY JSCNC

Year	Milestone
1979	JSCNC Established Start of Monthly Meetings at individual homes, informal Jain Pathshala
1980	Started Mahavir Jayanti Celebration at HSNC Temple, Ashe Avenue, Raleigh Started Annual Jain Camp start of Jain Scholar Visits and Swadhyayas
1982	1st Edition - Children's self-study book printed
1983	Registered with IRS, Tax Exempt status EIN/Tax ID: 56-1305715
1984	2nd Edition - Children's self-study book printed
1986	Mahavir Swami Murti Sthapana at HSNC JSCNC joins Federation of JAINA Start of weekly Puja of Mahavir Swami
1987	Mahavir Jayanti Celebration shifted to HSNC Temple, Aviation Parkway, Morrisville
1988	1st Edition - Jain Stavans Book Published Saturday to Saturday Paryushan observance began
1989	Samvatsari English Pratikraman for Kids started
1990	Weekly Swadhyaya Started Start of Highway Clean Up volunteering
1991	First youth workshop at New York Jain Bulletin Board established
1993	Jainism.org website established Diksha Drama Performance at JAINA Convention, Pittsburgh, PA
1994	Teaching of Jainism via E-mail started
1997	2nd YJA Southeast regional convention hosted
1998	1st Edition - Membership Directory Published 2nd Edition - Jain Stavans Book Published Education workshop for Pathshala teachers hosted Sametshikharji and Veerayatan Pilgrimage participation
1999	2nd Edition - Membership Directory Published 20th Anniversary Celebration 20 years history published
2001	Mahavir Jayanti Celebration started at HSNC Cultural Hall
2002	Formal Pathshala started
2004	JSCNC.org is on World Wide Web Shift from paper newsletters to email communications
2008	Jain Camp renamed Camp Lalit in memory of Lalit Banker Start of CROP Walk volunteering
2010	Stavan books in Hindi, English and Gujarati were printed
2011	JSCNC Communication fully migrated to Google Suite Newsletters switched to Google Docs & Standard format established First edition of JSCNC print directory in the new, spiral bound format published
2012	Chaitya Paripati - Richmond Jain Sangh

2014	Constitution reviewed, updated, and adopted
2015	Record JSCNC attendance at the JAINA convention in Atlanta
2016	Second edition of JSCNC print directory in the spiral bound format published
2017	Chaitya Paripati - NJ Jain Sangh
2019	Social Media adoption expanded to Facebook Panel discussion on college admissions and beyond
2020	JSCNC.org Website redesigned and switched to Bluehost/Wordpress In collaboration with Jaina delivered 50 chromebooks to local school district JSCNC meetings, events organized virtually considering COVID-19 JSCNC Assistance Program (JAP) started to help members in need Engaged with HSNC in preparing meals to help community members in crisis JSCNC registered with PVSA (Presidential Volunteer Service Award) JSCNC celebrated 40th Anniversary Virtually by publishing eSouvenir

JSCNC ACTIVITIES

CAMP LALIT: A GREAT TRADITION

JSCNC has always been about traditions, standing the test of time, circumstances and challenges we all face in the world around us! One of the biggest traditions, which has been ongoing since 1980, is the **JSCNC** Camp in the fall of each year. It is a weekend activity, wherein we gather on a Friday afternoon after work and disperse on Sunday after lunch with several families staying overnight.

The thread of friendships, knowledge on spirituality and fun times spent together, including delicious vegetarian food, all with the community in a serene setting has always been the theme and backdrop of this for **JSCNC** activity for generations. We have been fortunate to have a serene setting so close to home at Umstead State Park where we have hosted the camp for the longest times (perhaps from the very beginning with maybe one or two early years as exceptions). Camp Lapihio site at Umstead State Park is an integral part of Camp Lalit history and tradition!

Further, we have been fortunate enough to have excellent scholars visit our center over the years including some key dignitaries such as Pujya Acharya Sushil Muniji who blessed us all with his presence several times in the 1980s, Dr. Bharil, Bandhu Triputi, Sadhaviji Madhusmitaji, Dhirajlal Panditji, Tarlaben Doshi and many many others, including some recent years of visits by Samanijis from Jain Viswa Bharti. The other big thread of camps have been its volunteers and people who lead the activities and organizing these over the years.

Lalit Banker led the camp for the longest time from the start and had been a passionate caring individual, and the camp was renamed to Camp Lalit upon his passing in 2008. It is the leadership, love and passion of Mr. Banker and other leaders of the community, which not only kept this tradition alive, but it thrived and evolved as the times changed. One of the key themes and focus he added to the camp is one which gave emphasis to children and their priorities as the next generation for all of us.

The activities at the camp have always been primarily focused around spiritual uplift through Jainism related sessions delivered by the scholars who visit us each year, along with time to enjoy nature and games/sports for all ages, delicious food prepared with love by volunteers has always been the tradition of the camp. Late Shri Ramesh Fofaria, Shri Pravinbhai Shah, Late Lalit Banker and subsequently Kamlesh Shah with their volunteer teams carefully plan the entire 2-3 day [Camp Schedule](#), activities noted below for youth and adults and the entire food menu schedule! In recent years, this has included the youth members giving a presentation about their national and international service activities.

Some key traditions of the camp have included the following: but a lot more than these

- Begin the day with Yoga & Bhaktamar led by scholars
- Discourses by guest scholars (including our own local scholars from **JSCNC**)
- Group picture of the entire camp attendees, taking us down the memory lane year after year

- Outdoor games and sports, organized ones and free play time for children of all ages, as well as joint adult/kids games such as “kho kho” have been huge traditions
- Slideshow presenting photos of previous and current camps, which is enjoyed by everyone, watching themselves grow and change over the years
- Nature walks, runs, biking and Yoga (more recent years)
- Nighttime “dhamaal”, talent show, Jokes/Gossips and night walks
- Excellent meals prepared (or semi-catered in recent years) by volunteers including traditional “ganthia jalebi”, “Vegan Pizzas”, “Tacos”, fresh fruits, snacks at night, and of course our Sunday lunch Sandwich are big in the camp
- Baking cookies and doing vegan s’mores have been more recent tradition
- Separate sessions for children/youth in English
- Arts & Crafts for children including Origami by Dhairya in recent years
- Invited guests for non-Jainism but critical topics for the society or encouragement are also tradition now in recent years, including an everest mountaineer, a nutritionist, youth leaders with focus on environmental cause and so on
- Group discussion sessions by our invited guests.
- Youth led sessions sharing their life experiences etc. are a big part of our tradition
- Yoga and meditation activities, not only by our visiting scholars but also from local yoga teacher who is part of the community

One of the keyways the Camp Lalit has evolved is focus on and participation by youth as well as extension into the rest of the Jain community beyond regular **JSCNC** members/families. This has also been helped by visiting scholars who communicate both in Hindi/Gujrati as well as English, making it easier for all to understand and relate to the goals of the camp.

Late Lalit Banker, who led the camp for a long time, had always encouraged the participation and promoting the activity by the children & youth of the community. The camp now has a number of activities for children and youth and some are highlighted below.

- Kids arts and crafts -- Origami by Dhairya has become quite popular
- Nature walks for all kids
- Kids sports and competitive games
- Talent show for all children staying overnight
- Youth outdoor sports, flag football being more popular
- Bike rides
- Baking Vegan cookies

Further, the camp has reached a pivot in terms of participation levels to allow for more broader interest in addition to spiritual development scholarly discourse. We have taken on more topics of broader interest due to changing demographics to allow for more of the community to participate and join the camp.

Where we see Camp Lalit going from here is to continue accelerating the involvement and leadership of youth in defining the narrative for activities, as well as leading the camp itself in coming years. The mission of Camp Lalit, to enable and educate in a fun and natural environment remains the same, although the means to that end is evolving as our community evolves.

Camp Lalit is made possible by dedication of volunteers from the community and is entirely run by volunteers! There are so many volunteers over the years who have greatly contributed to make the camp successful year over year. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize them and thank them for their efforts!

Here is to 40 more years of Camp Lalit!



1992 - Camp Lalit



1992 Camp Lalit



2012 Camp Lalit



2019 - Camp Lalit



2019 - Young Jains Participation

CROP WALK

In 2008 Interfaith Alliance of Wake County requested **JSCNC** to help them to manage Raleigh Crop Walk Fiscal and donation receipts on the day of the event. Ajay Shah accepted the responsibility as Crop Walk treasurer. He has achieved outstanding success in this responsibility and together with his wife Jayshreeben dedicated themselves to this humanitarian cause.

What is CROP? CROP (Christian Rural Overseas Program) Hunger Walks are community-wide events sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local congregations or groups to raise funds to end hunger at home and around the world. CROP Hunger Walks help to support the overall ministry of Church World Service, especially grassroots, hunger-fighting development efforts around the world. In addition, each local CROP Hunger Walk can choose to return up to 25 percent of the funds it raises to hunger-fighting programs in its own community.

CROP Hunger Walks help to provide food and water, as well as resources that empower people to meet their own needs. From seeds and tools, to wells and water systems, to technical training and micro-enterprise loans, the key is people working together to identify their own development priorities, their strengths and their needs, something CWS has learned through some 68 years of working in partnership around the world.

Since 2008, **JSCNC** members including young children are actively involved by participating in the Annual CROP Walk and contributing major donations. Approximately 500 to 800 individuals participate in the Walk, typically scheduled every year usually in the month of October and raising \$40,000 to \$50,000. The help provided by **JSCNC** members align with our goals to help needy people and organizations while involving members of all ages, especially young adults. The annual ritual promotes social responsibilities without religion boundaries.

We are very proud and thankful to our teenagers volunteering on the day to manage cash / check donations and tallying the donations received from all organizations on the Walk-day.

For many years **JSCNC** is the second largest group of about 50+ individuals (the largest Group being the High Land United Methodist Church about 80 + individuals) walking on the Walk-day.

In 2018, **JSCNC** members contributed the highest donation ever for the CROP. In 2019, **JSCNC** raised the second highest donations ever. It is a fun social event for everyone dancing, playing drums, music, and enjoying the walk-through downtown in support of this humanitarian cause and at the end receiving a special food treat from *Jayshreeben* and *Ajaybhai Shah*.

This year's walk will most likely be a virtual walk due to Covid 19 restrictions. We still want to participate in the virtual walk and help collect donations in this year of greater need than ever before.



ISCNC Team of Volunteers & CROP Walkers - 2019

HIGHWAY CLEANUP

History of NC Adopt-A-Highway Program

In response to growing public concern about trash and debris along North Carolina's roadways, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) established its Adopt-a-Highway program in 1988. Since then, thousands of volunteers have not only helped reduce litter but also saved North Carolina's taxpayers millions of dollars annually in roadside cleanup costs.

With more than 120,000 participants across North Carolina, Adopt-A-Highway is made up of civic and community groups — including schools, religious, professional, and social organizations — as well as individuals and families.

The NCDOT asks volunteer groups to commit at least four years to a 2-mile stretch of roadway. Litter cleanups happen at least four times a year.

NCDOT, in turn, installs two Adopt-A-Highway signs, each with a recognition panel, on both ends of the adopted roadway and provides the training and materials that volunteers need to safely carry out their goals.

JSCNC Adopts the Adopt-A-Highway-Program

Late Lalit Banker worked for the EPA but devoted his life to our community. Whether it was JSCNC, HSNC, or local community events, he was always there leading and never expected anything from anyone. He stayed away from limelight and gave credit to others for the work he did. He was always looking for youth involvement and finding new ways to make the community kids oriented.



In 1990, Lalit Banker inspired the youth and adults of the Jain Study Center along with the Hindu Society to take social and civic responsibility by adopting a two-mile section of Aviation Parkway near the Hindu Temple. Later in 2001, JSCNC adopted a two mile stretch of Highway 54 (Chapel Hill Road in Morrisville/Cary) as part of NCDOT's Adopt-A-Highway program. Twice a year, JSCNC adults are accompanied by the youth to pick up litter from this highway. This section of highway cleanup is dedicated to Lalit Banker who devoted his life to selfless service for the community he lived in.

We are proud to say that the JSCNC community has been keeping up with this program very enthusiastically. Both adults and youth regularly participate in this highway clean up activity four times a year to keep North Carolina beautiful by giving back to the community. At times, the task is quite challenging, where you have to pick up trash by the roadside where there is

no sidewalk, but our volunteers do it diligently under the supervision of adult leaders. Over the past 30 years, scores of adults and generations of youth have participated in this volunteer activity.

This activity has taught the young generation to be involved in the community, learn to volunteer, and become responsible citizens as they grow up. It has had the added benefit of working as a team and opportunity to socialize with all the volunteers.

We hope to continue this activity and do our part under the proud banner of **JSCNC** for many more years to come. Since the passing away of Lalit Banker, Pritesh Shah has assumed the leadership for this activity.

As a tribute to Lalit Banker, **JSCNC** decided to dedicate the sign to him in 2008 after his passing. When you are on Chapel Hill Road, in Cary, look for the sign shown in the attached picture.



2014: Highway Cleanup



2019: Highway Cleanup

MAHAVIR JAYANTI - MAHAVIR JANMA KALYANAK

The Jain Study Center of NC (**JSCNC**) has been celebrating the annual Mahavir Janma Kalyanak - Mahavir Jayanti program since its inception in 1979. This is one of the important religious festivals in Jainism that the Jain members look forward to, every year. Mahavir Swami was born on the thirteenth day of the bright half of the moon in the month of Chaitra based on the Indian lunar calendar, which corresponds to the month of March or April every year. It is a celebration of the birth of Mahavir, the twenty-fourth and the last tirthankara of the present times.

JSCNC celebrates this festival in a unique way. Mahavir Jayanti program was initially held at the HSNC temple on Ashe Avenue/Pullen Park, Raleigh, NC before the HSNC temple was built on its current location in Morrisville. This program was attended by 150-200 people and prasad for all the attendees was lovingly prepared in house by the **JSCNC** members. For the past several years the attendance has increased to 475+ and so the Jain/Vegan prasad is now catered from a professional vendor.

The format of the program has remained constant for years. We start the program with a Ashta-Prakari or Snatra Puja followed by a cultural program and concluding with a delicious lunch or dinner. The participants including the children and youth enthusiastically plan and practice for several months. Each year the cultural program is a sight to behold. There is usually an exhibition of Jain books and related items. The books are available to members at no cost. In certain years, **JSCNC** members have been recognized with the Lifetime Service Award.

The planning for this event starts around January of that year. The 3-member task force is created under the leadership of the **JSCNC** President. The task force consisting of Mahavir Jayanti Coordinator, Puja Coordinator, and the Cultural coordinator plan the entire program in consultation with the Executive Committee.

The puja program is organized & managed by a sub-committee and the participation is mostly by the pathshala attending children. The focus of performing this puja is for the kids/youths to learn & understand the Jain rituals. The puja ceremony is concluded by Shanti-kalash ritual mostly performed by recent high school graduates. During the puja activities live music is played with the help of the local talent.

The cultural program is planned and executed by the Cultural Coordinator. The cultural program consists of songs, dances and skits based on Jain morals and principles. These performances are choreographed and directed by the community volunteers. The age group of participants ranges from five years to adults. Recently we have seen that more and more youths are taking leadership positions in choreographing, being master of ceremonies, and in coordinating this event.

The coordinators are recognized during the program by the President and puja and cultural participants receive an appreciation gift for their hard work and dedication. **JSCNC** is very fortunate to receive the generous donation from its members to make this event a big success. **JSCNC** also takes this opportunity to recognize selected members with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

To make this event successful we rely on many volunteers. JSCNC appreciates and is thankful to all the Jain members and community volunteers who help the core team at every step of this celebration.



Mahavir Jayanti - 1992



Mahavir Jayanti 1997



Mahavir Jayanti - 2001



Mahavir Jayanti - 2002



Mahavir Jayanti - 2019



Mahavir Jayanti - 2019

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Introduction

The monthly meeting is the cornerstone of the Jain Study Center (**JSCNC**). These monthly meetings accomplish the goals of the Center: study of Jainism, children's education, spiritual activities, and bringing the community together with spiritual and social events.

History

It is difficult to imagine how the Center got its start. Chetana Fofaria, Pravin Shah and Arti Shah, founder members of **JSCNC**, recall the beginning of Jain Study Center. In the late 1970's, there were not that many Jain families in the Research Triangle area nor had the current tremendous growth occurred. Some of these families were not even familiar with each other.

Towards the end of 1978, Pravin Shah, Ramesh Fofaria and others discussed having a get together of the Jain families in the Triangle area. Manorama and Suresh Jain (who have since moved away) volunteered to host this first get together. Manorama Jain insisted she would prepare the meal for all. This first meeting was so successful that those present decided to hold similar meetings - get together at monthly intervals. At Artiben's insistence subsequent meetings were to be potluck. This was the start of rotation of meetings at member's homes with potluck lunches. Ramesh Fofaria implemented the preparation of the annual schedule of monthly meeting hosts and the Food table for the potluck lunches.

This was the start of what now we know as the Jain Study Center! In 1979, the Center was formally registered as the Jain Study Center of North Carolina, a tax-exempt, non-profit religious organization. The objectives of **JSCNC** are to study and understand the Jain religion along with the philosophies, rituals and literature as well as educating the future generations. The [founding members](#) of **JSCNC** are noted in this list.

Very soon a format for the monthly meeting was established to fulfill the objectives of the Center as follows:

- Recitation of Navakar Mantra and Stavans
- Children presentations of the sutras and stories they have studied
- Discourse by local and visiting scholars and discussion
- Administrative items and announcements
- Mangal Divo and Arti
- Potluck lunch

Achievements

Over the past 40 years, the monthly meetings have evolved with the growth of the community and changing times as noted below. Monthly meetings continue to address the challenges and opportunities in a progressive manner under the capable leadership of successive **JSCNC** presidents, Executive Committees, Advisors, and input from the community.

Recitation of Navakar Mantra and Stavans

In the formative years of **JSCNC** in the 1980's, a stavan book was compiled and it became a routine to recite several stavans from this book at the monthly meetings starting with the Navakar Mantra. This had the impact of members and children becoming familiar with them, understanding their meanings, and for some committing them to memory. Apart from the recitation of the stavans from the Stavan book, members enrich the stavan recitation by their favorite stavans. The Stavan book itself has evolved from a loose collection to a formal bound book with Gujarati, Hindi, and English scripts.

Children and Youth Education

To assist the children with their study of Jain religion, "Folders" were compiled in 1982 (version-1) and 1984 (version-2) composed of five sections: Jain stories, Samayik sutra, other sutras, basic philosophy, and prayers. This Folder was distributed to other Jain Centers in North America where it was used in their Pathshalas.

A unique tradition got established in the early years where children who had studied the items from the "Folder" came to the forefront of the group and recited them at the monthly meetings. With an increasing number of children, children went to a breakout place during the adult discourses for Pathshala teaching. Volunteer Pathshala Coordinators took charge of a variety of Pathshala activities (please see Pathshala article for more details). Add picture of children presenting at monthly meeting

Past President Anand Shah recalls that with the increase in the number of children attending the Pathshala, their varying age groups, and the limited space availability, the search for off-site Pathshala started in 2014. After considering various options and parameters, a new space was found just adjacent to HSNC at Triangle Collaborative School.

The first Pathshala class was held there on May 3rd, 2015. Following an ownership change at that location, Pathshala had to relocate one more time to its current location at Champion Learning Academy in Morrisville. The first class at this new location was held on Nov 6th, 2016 and the classes have been held there ever since. Pathshala has been an amazing success with excellent JAINA curriculum books compiled and published by founder member Pravin Shah and other educational and service activities under the direction of the Pathshala Coordinators Rita Lodaya, Sejal Shah, Shweta Shah, Neha Mehta and Purvi Shah.

Discourses

The discourses at the monthly meetings by local speakers and visiting scholars are very well received. The topics have ranged from Fundamentals of Jainism, Tattvarth Sutra, Atma Siddhi shastra, Karma, practical aspects like diet, application of Jain principles in daily life, meditation, and yoga. Frequent local speakers have included Pravin Shah, Mahesh Varia, Ramnik Zota, Sudhir Shah, and Amit Pothiwala ([Meeting Speakers](#)). The discourses are educational, interactive, and provide opportunities for questions and answers. Live discussion also ensues after the meeting.

The monthly meeting presentations have adapted to technological developments. Past **ISCNC** president Anand Shah recalls that the very first major technology upgrade occurred

over several months from March through May 2013 and consisted of a brand-new PA system, ultra-thin laptop, projector and a stand. The first use of this technology was in September 2013 for a discourse given by Pravin Shah on “Jain Food”.

COVID-19 restriction on public gatherings brought new challenges for **JSCNC** activities and the monthly meeting. Mahavir Jayanti celebration had to be cancelled. The first virtual meeting on Webex was the April 2020 monthly meeting where Pravin Shah presented a discourse on the Life of Mahavir Swami.



April 2020 – First Virtual Meeting

Administrative items and announcements

Transparency in administration is evident by the open communications between the President/Executive Committee and the members, updates and announcements, and actions are taken with consensus among all. Fundraising for natural disasters and humanitarian aid is well supported by the members. Special events and requests for volunteers are readily supported. In 2018, recitation of Uvasagghram Sutra was introduced to conclude the monthly meeting before the Arti and Mangal Divo.

Mangal Divo and Arti

Traditionally the meeting is concluded with Mangal Divo and Arti at the photo images of Navakar Mantra in the early years prior to the pratistha of Mahavir Swami murti in 1986 at HSN. For many years now, the Pathshala children lead the singing of the Mangal Divo and the Arti.

Potluck Lunch

The tradition of sadharmic lunch has continued since the very first monthly meeting. Over the past 40 years, this lunch too has evolved. Whereas it was traditional to have potluck, on special occasions members have volunteered to support the entire lunch. Starting in 2018, members can make a donation for certain food items to be catered instead of preparing them at home.

On Mother’s Day, the children, and fathers volunteer to prepare the food and serve it to the mothers. Father’s Day is celebrated as an outdoor picnic at a community park. On both the Mother’s Day and the Father’s Day, ‘children’ of all ages recite a poem or a story of appreciation of their mother and father respective days.

Evaluation

The monthly meetings have been outstanding in accomplishing **JSCNC**’s objectives of spiritual traditions, children and adult education, and social interactions. **JSCNC** and the

monthly meeting activities have evolved to meet the needs of the growing community, adopted technology, and is a vibrant Center.

The success of children's education in Jain values is reflected in the lifelong impact on their activities and careers. Members who have moved away from this area fondly remember the spirituality and sociability of the **JSCNC**. Articles in this eSouvenir and the 20th Anniversary souvenir by former and current members are a testimony to the success of **JSCNC**.



1997 Monthly Meeting



2015 Monthly Meeting



2019 Monthly Meeting

PATHSHALA

VISION:

Teach Jainism as a way of life, starting at an early age, to build a strong foundation of values; values that will stay with the next generation through their lifetime.

Pathshala is an integral & vibrant part of the **JSCNC** community. In keeping with the vision above, pathshala teachers strive to teach Jain principles and values in a way that kids can understand, relate to, and apply in their daily lives.

In addition to learning the basic Jain principles, students are involved in activities that empower them to make appropriate choices and become good citizens. Students are given tasks/ homework to enhance their learning.

FORMAT:

Currently, **JSCNC** has four pathshala classes:

Group	Age group (years)	Number of students (2020)	Current Teachers
Arihant	4-5	11	Neha Mehta
Veer	6-8	10	Shweta Shah
Vardhmaan	9-12	16	Sejal Shah
Mahavir	13+	12	Purvi Shah & Rita Lodaya

Current Location: Champion Learning Academy, 106 Pheasant Wood Ct, Morrisville

Academic Year: January - December

Frequency: Twice a month (1st & 3rd Sundays)

Duration: 1.5 hours/class

Schedule:

10:45am: Drop off Begins
11:00-12:30: Pathshala class (1st Sunday)
11:00-12:15p: Pathshala class (3rd Sunday)

- The teachers use age-appropriate curriculum and textbooks published by the JAINA Education Committee
- Lesson plan and homework details are sent via email to all students/parents
- Interactive teaching methods are used in classrooms to engage students in learning subject material
- Slide Presentations are used by teachers as well as students to discuss and review various Jain concepts, and to present research projects

- Pathshala teachers communicate with each other on a regular basis either by face to face meet or via phone conference or text messages

In addition to classroom learning, students actively participate in

- Community Service events: Volunteering at the Food Bank; Highway cleanup (Adopt-A-Highway), Crop Walk
- Age-appropriate contests: Coloring; Essay competitions, Camp Activities
- **JSCNC** community monthly meeting
 - Recitation of sutras, stavans etc.
 - Presentations for Mother's Day, Father's Day, Paryushan, Diwali, Thanksgiving
 - Jain Halloween
 - Singing and participating in Aarti and Mangal Deevo
- Paryushan
 - Performing Ashta Prakari Puja
 - Performing English Pratikraman and/or Traditional Pratikraman
 - Participating in Paryushan Activity Challenge
 - Singing stavans during Bhavana

JSCNC pathshala has continued to expand and evolve over the last 38 years.

Starting with only a few children in 1982, student enrollment has grown to an average of about 50 students over the past ten years (2011-2020).

MILESTONES:

- 1982: "Jain Folder"- First edition of Children's Self-study book was printed (Prepared by Ramesh Fofaria and Pravin Shah)
- 1989: First Samvatsari Pratikraman in English for children was conducted (Prepared and Explained by Pravin Shah)
- 1998: Education Workshop for Pathshala teachers was hosted by **JSCNC**; Organized and conducted by Pravinbhai Shah
- 2003: JAINA recognition award to Jyoti Shah at the 12th Biennial Jaina Convention
- 2007: Position of **Youth Coordinator** (pathshala teacher/s) added to the Executive committee
- 2007 - 2009: New activities initiated such as Jain Olympics (encouraging both physical and mental fitness), Treasure Hunt (with Palitana as destination), and Jain Jeopardy
- 2011: Two classes formally given names- Younger group was named Vardhman and Older group was named Mahavir
- 2012 Teachers (Sejal Shah and Rita Lodaya) attended Pathshala Teachers Conference, Los Angeles, CA
- 2013: Online Registration for classes started
- 2014: Third class added (Veer group)
- 2015: Position of **Pathshala Director** added to the Executive Committee
- 2018: Fourth class added (Arihant group)
- 2019: Paryushan Activity Challenge started for all age groups

Pathshala locations over the years:

- 1982: Began as part of **JSCNC** meetings, rotated in members home with small number of children
- 2003-May 2015: HSNL Temple - Library/ Meeting Room/ Stage/ Cultural Hall
- May 2015-Aug 2016: 4000 Bear Cat Way, Suite 104, Morrisville

- Sept 2016-present: Champion Learning Academy-106 Pheasant Wood Ct, Morrisville
NOTE: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, since April 2020, we have moved to online pathshala classes (WEBEX platform)

Pathshala teachers over the years:

- 1980-1987: Pravin Shah and Ramesh Fofaria
- 1985-1986: Kokila Doshi
- 1994-1997: Rekha Banker
- 2002-2004: Jyoti Kamlesh Shah
- 2003-2006; 2010: Pritesh Shah
- 2007-2009; 2019-present: Purvi Ketan Shah
- 2008- present: Rita Lodaya
- 2011-present: Sejal Shah
- 2014-present: Shweta Shah
- 2018-present: Neha Mehta

FUTURE PLANS:

- To further increase the number of classes.
If the age range of the current groups is narrower, it will provide ease and flexibility to the teachers for age-appropriate instruction; and the students will benefit too.
- To train more volunteer teachers- encourage young parents and local youth to teach classes
- To have our own place to conduct classes.
Currently **JSCNC** pathshala uses a rental location (an afterschool facility) for its bimonthly classes. Having our own place would provide:
 1. the flexibility to add/restructure classes as needed
 2. better control over scheduling, frequency, and timings
 3. the ability to showcase student work- essays, paintings, crafts, projects
 4. a space to conduct activities beyond the classroom, including but not limited to celebrations, practices for Annual Cultural Program, class meetups for special projects

Pathshala teachers can be contacted at jscncpathshala@gmail.com

PARYUSHAN

Paryushan is one of the most auspicious and solemn spiritual upliftments. Its main tenets are introspection, penance, and forgiveness. It has always been **JSCNC**'s intent that all members of the community are able to participate in this festival to its fullest extent.

After the formation of **JSCNC**, *Paryushan* was continued to be observed on the same days as in India to match with the weeklong Jain calendar. The 1st day, the day before the 1st day, the day after the last day and last day of the *Paryushan* are full of religious activities. Adult members recite the traditional Samvatsari Pratikraman sutras. Initially, Ramesh Fofaria and later Rajen Doshi organized these assignments. Also, initially the traditional **JSCNC** Samvatsari Pratikraman was held at member's home. For many years, the **JSCNC** Samvatsari Pratikraman was held at Mahesh and Indu Varia's home and more recently at Bhairav and Sejal Shah's home. Daily *Paryushan* Pratikramans and the Samvatsari Pratikraman on traditional Samvatsari day according to respective sects are also held at the homes of Arvind Shah, Ramnik Zota, and individual members' homes.

The **JSCNC** community and its leaders soon came to realize that observing a *Paryushan* with beginning and ending during weekdays, caused members to not fully participate in the *Pujas* and *Pratikramans*, due to work and schools. This was not conducive to a proper observation and practice of this festival. There had to be a better solution.

One of the founding members of **JSCNC**, Pravin K. Shah, came up with an idea for solving this problem for all Jains living in the U.S.A. Before proposing a solution, Pravinbhai conducted an in-depth research into how the *Tithis* like *Chauth* and *Pancham* were added to the Hindu and Jain calendars, including how the calendars themselves were being set by the *Janma Bhumi Panchang* authorities. With this extensive research, which also included discussing the predicament with various other scholars, the solution presented itself.

[Refer Pravin Shah's Article for more details](#)

The **JSCNC** committee proposed, and the community accepted, a new time frame for observing *Paryushan* for its members and others who may wish to follow.

WEEKEND TO WEEKEND *PARYUSHANS!*

This was a bold move, as there was no historical evidence of anyone ever having done that. It was a move that allowed **JSCNC**'s members the full opportunity and time to observe *Paryushan activities*. The "**JSCNC Paryushan**" days were set on a Saturday-to-Saturday schedule that aligned as close as possible to the "traditional *Paryushan*" days per the *JAIN* calendar.

JSCNC observes the weekend-to-weekend *Paryushan* even to this day!

Due to this change, more members (youths and adults alike) started participating in *Tapascharyas*, *Snatra* and *Ashtaprakari* pujas at the HSNC Temple, evening *Pratikramans*, *Bhavanas*, *Samvatsari Pratikramans* and *Samuha Parnas*.

The first day of the Paryushan is observed at the HSNC temple with obeisance to Tirthankara Mahavir Swami murti, Ashtaprakari Puja, Bhavana, Pachkhan, Arti and Mangal Divo. **JSCNC** also undertakes evening Bhavana with musical accompaniments on the seventh day of Paryushan. Members may continue with daily traditional Pratikraman at their homes. The last day of Paryushan is again observed in a similar manner as the first day at the HSNC temple followed by the evening Samvatsari Pratikraman as noted below. It goes to show that although there was a slight adjustment to the actual days observed by the rest of the world, the increased participation by the members of **JSCNC** far outweighed the status quo.

JSCNC, and more so Pravinbhai, did not stop there. **JSCNC** was the first to start conducting *Pratikramans* in the English language, with the help of an English *Pratikraman* book. Both of these actions are due to the tremendous effort put in by Pravinbhai to translate into English and publish the first English *Pratikraman* book.

Another important aspect of these English *Pratikramans*, specifically the *Samvatsari Pratikraman*, was that they were entirely performed by the youth of the community. This allowed the youth to become active participants in the *Pratikraman* process and gain an insightful understanding. This tradition has become so successful and understandable, that an increasing number of adults now opt to participate in the English Pratikraman. Conducting and coordinating all the various activities during *Paryushan* is a major task. Thanks to all the **JSCNC** members who come together every year to make it a smooth process for everyone else.

The **JSCNC** community has grown from approximately 15 families in 1980, to over 250 families today. Some of those families' children and grandchildren are participating in **JSCNC's** various activities. The rich culture they have grown up and learned with, will not only help them wherever they go, but it will also help to keep our religion and culture flourishing in this great country we now call home.

JSCNC does not want to rely on its past laurels. We want to continue to strive to better ourselves and bring unity to the different sects in the Jain religion. At present, the various sects like *Svetambara*, *Sthanakwasi*, *Digambar*, etc. observe and perform their own *Pratikramans*. Our goal is to have ONE UNITED PRATIKRAMAN for all members.

The first 40 years of **JSCNC** has brought many firsts, like the weekend-to-weekend observation of *Paryushan* and the first English *Pratikraman* books. We look forward to forging more new paths for the betterment of Jains in the USA and the world beyond.



1998: Paryushan Celebration



2019: Paryushan Celebration

YJA (JSCNC FROM A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE)

BY PAYAL MEHTA

Young Jains of America (YJA) is an entity of the Federation of the Jain Associations in North America ([JAINA](#)), a non-profit religious organization. YJA serves Jain youth from ages 14-29. YJA was first established in 1991 and held its first biennial youth convention in 1994. Today, YJA serves over 10,000 members, creating opportunities for Jain youth to connect through social events, service and education. Our Executive Board works with a network of [Local Representatives](#), as well as local Jain youth groups, [College Chapters](#), and other interfaith organizations across our six regions to host events, develop and share resources, and build communities. Our members are the next generation of Jain leaders in North America, and we strive to constantly bring together the knowledge and wisdom of our global community with the technology and opportunity of the 21st century to make Jainism relevant to their daily lives!

Getting involved with YJA may seem daunting, but in reality, it's not! Usually, all you have to do is reach out to your LRs or someone that you know who is in YJA, and just ask them to join. Events are optional, but always fun, and help you grow your YJA community. We host one major event a year, and that's the YJA convention. From all nighters, to sessions discussing different Jain and general topics, the convention is not to be missed. We have found some of our closest friends through YJA, and every year excites us because the memories we make at YJA are like none other.

YJA being introduced to **JSCNC** was a great way for people aged 14-29 to get involved in the Jain community in our area. We have held many events with great turnout and have had fundraising events which the **JSCNC** has helped with in the past. YJA is so glad to be active in the community the last few years at **JSCNC**.

BY HETALI LODAYA

There is no other way to say it: **JSCNC** youth get involved. While I did not grow up at **JSCNC**, in the 13+ years my family has been here, we have seen the ways that youth show up and contribute.

My personal story of involvement starts with coming to **JSCNC** and helping Purvi Shah teach pathshala classes. I slowly got more involved with both our youth activities and with Young Jains of America (YJA) events, finally attending a YJA Southeast Retreat in 2011. That retreat sent the train out of the station - Pavak Shah convinced me to apply for YJA Board the following year under him as Co-Chair, and YJA has been a big part of my life for the past decade. We've carried on the tradition that Dina Mehta (now Fifadra) started when she was on the YJA Board from 1997-1999 - four of the last ten YJA Southeast Regional Coordinators have been **JSCNC** youth!

The best part about our YJA involvement is being able to travel together to retreats and to YJA conventions, meeting other youth and deepening our understanding of our faith while also frantically waving anytime we spot each other across the hotel lobby so we can take a picture.

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We bring what we learn at these national gatherings back to NC, and share with each other at local events, dinner parties, and whenever we have the chance to meet up. Our youth involvement is about Jainism, but it is also simply about being friends. Many of us go on to attend local universities and continue to see each other whenever we can, meeting up over holiday breaks or on campus, mentoring and helping each other through college and career, and strengthening the relationships we begin at **JSCNC**.

In the past 10 years alone, our youth have:

- Served as YJA Co-Chairs, Director of Events, Southeast Regional Coordinators, Local Representatives, Convention Committee members, and subcommittee volunteers
- Won the JAINA Youth Award
- Started the national-scale Jain Mentorship Program
- Served as MCs for our Mahavir Jayanti program
- Helped organize local meetups for youth and volunteering events
- Helped teach our Pathshala classes
- Redesigned the JSCNC website

The best part about all of this is that we know a new generation is following in our footsteps. Already, I see the current Pathshala students writing skits for Mahavir Jayanti, signing up to be YJA Local Representatives - Arnav Shah even designed the new **JSCNC** website! I am confident **JSCNC** youth will continue to be just as involved and give back just as much to our community for the next 20 years and beyond.

QUOTES AND MEMORIES FROM JSCNC YOUTH

"JSCNC has given me some of my best friends for life - my beta brothers! I know that I can always count on them, and the community as a whole. From Jain Camp, to YJA retreats and conventions, we have made so many memories together over the years. I'm so thankful for the Jain center and our community here in North Carolina for bringing us together."

--Kunal Lodaya

"Camp Lalit was one of my favorite memories growing up with **JSCNC**... the community came together and has always been supportive of its youth providing great social, educational, and community activities."

--Poojan Mehta

"My favorite part of our annual Mahavir Jayanti celebrations was the skits we would put on. The first one I remember being part of consisted of Parv and me playing two students confused by our guru's teachings. Our most memorable exchange on stage went:

Mihir: (whispers) Eh, a Damodar Swami, eh kōṇ?

Parv: Mane nathi khabar, tu pooch!"

--Mihir Shah

“I remember being tremendously excited and nervous about my first YJA retreat. I was ready to spend a whole weekend with my best friends sans parents, but I was worried about meeting new people who might have thought that I was weird or different.

My fears were extinguished when the older members of the cohort from **JSCNC** took it upon themselves to treat me as an equal during games and sessions, and I left the campsite full of self-confidence. This self-confidence is what drives me to pursue passions and goals that I might not have otherwise developed, and I am forever grateful to YJA and **JSCNC** for it.”

-Parv Gondalia

“I always loved going to Jain events while growing up, I would get to see some of my best friends and do so many different fun activities. Through events such as Jain Camp, Father’s Day picnics, Jain meetings, and Mahavir Jayanti I was able to learn so many different values and different ways to approach life. I will always be thankful for the Jain community and what it has brought to me.”

--Avani Shah

“Some of my fondest memories were at Jain Camp. It was great to spend a few days with the entire community out at Umstead Park every year. The talent shows, sleep overs, games, and my personal favorite – football! We would play football every year, but I loved how it brought us together. When I was younger, there would be older kids like Mitul & Sumeet that would play with us. A few years later, we would do the same with the next group of younger kids. Everyone would play together from age 5 to 25 – it didn’t matter how old. That was what Jain Camp was all about – bringing us all together to have a good time!”

--Shawnak Rajen Doshi

“I feel so blessed to have grown up in this community with a constant source of comfort and confidence in my religion and heritage. It wasn’t difficult to develop my identity as a Jain second-generation American, because I was surrounded by role models that led by example. Whether it was the actual pathshala classes, Jain events, or just getting to interact with people from a similar background, I was regularly reminded of who I am and where I come from. I’m grateful for the open and welcoming environment that encouraged questions. That freedom allowed me to learn about my faith and develop my worldview without any limitations or pressure. And most importantly, I developed some of my most cherished relationships here. Uncles, aunties, mentors, and my best friends—I’ve always felt supported and cared for in a way that I could never repay, but only have gratitude for. I’m thrilled to see **JSCNC** moving forward after 40 years and can’t wait to see all the lives this community can change.”

--Naimi Pothiwala

“Jain camp was one of my favorite parts of the fall season growing up! I still remember all the times spent over the years there playing cabin tag, attending lectures, learning to cook different Jain/vegan recipes - all surrounded by nature and the warmth of the **JSCNC** community.”

--Mansi Shah

“The **JSCNC** youth community is small enough that everyone tends to know each other, and yet also big enough that the diversity of stories within the community has always kept me learning and engaged. Many of my closest friends came from this community, and I wouldn’t be anywhere near the person I am today without my peers, of all ages, helping me along the way.”

--Malay Shah

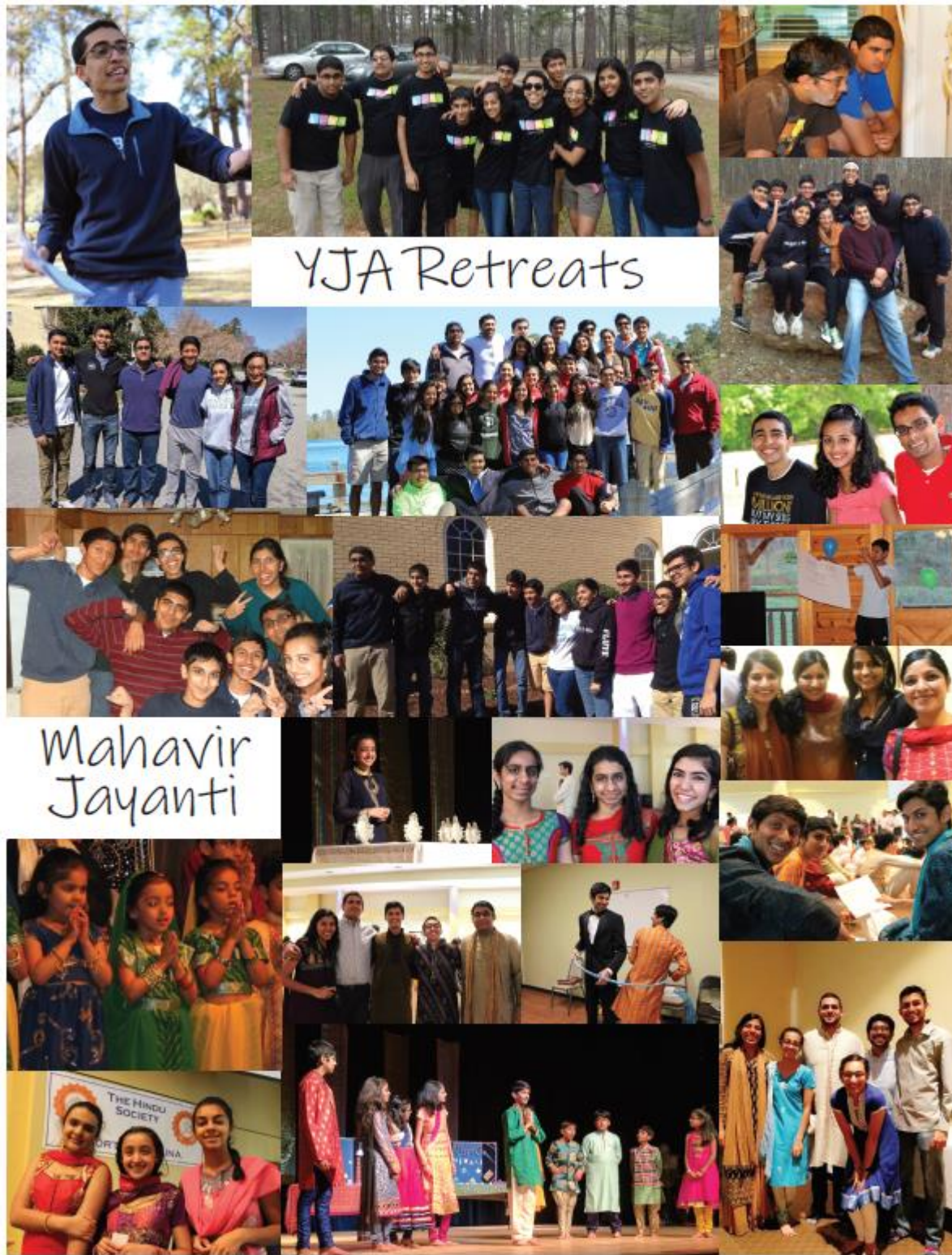
"Camp Lalit was always a fun time, especially when it came to football. I remember one camp, and one specific play where I scored a touchdown. I was one of the younger kids, and after scoring, I remember Mitul, one of the older kids, complimenting me on the play. He even said that he'd be my manager when I made it to the NFL. I never made it, but year after year, I could count on going to Jain events and having a great time!"

--Sohil Rajen Doshi

“Growing up in the **JSCNC** community provided me with a lifelong extended family. Whether it was attending Camp Lalit, participating in Mahavir Jayanti, or going to YJA retreats, there was never a time that I was alone. If you ask me, I’ve got friends of all ages, whether they’re babies or grandparents because I’ll have a conversation with all of them. I am proud to have been raised in this community and thankful for all the support I have received along the way.”

--Sheel Shah

A FEW PICTURES





SCHOLAR VISITS

From the inception of **JSCNC** and as one of its goals, **JSCNC** has focused on learning and advancing the knowledge of Jainism. A major part of this goal has been the visits by Jain Acharyas and Scholars particularly from India to present discourses, conduct Swadhyayas and Shibirs about the philosophy and practice of Jain way of life. In the early years when international travel was difficult, availability of Jain scriptures and books scarce, and there was no internet, **JSCNC** succeeded in this mission. Acharyas and Scholars were invited even then and Jain resources made available to the members. The tradition of inviting Acharyas and Scholars continues every year.

We appreciate the Scholars and Executive Committee for organizing this. We are thankful to the members for contributing to this endeavor and willingly host and meet the specific needs of the Acharyas and Scholars.

Please visit [JSCNC Visiting Scholars](#) to learn more about scholar visits over the years.

JSCNC LOVES VEERAYATAN

Veerayatan was established in *Rajgir, Bihar, India* by *Acharya Shriji Chandanaji* in 1973. Veerayatan stands on three pillars, *Seva* (Humanitarian Services), *Shiksha* (Education), and *Sadhana* (Inner Spiritual Development) based on Jain Principles. The pillar of *Seva* is exemplified in medical services that Veerayatan provides at no charge to needy people in Rajgir and other places where it operates. Several educational institutions that Veerayatan has founded are an emblem of the *Shiksha* pillar. For *Sadhna*, construction is ongoing in Palitana for a Vidyapith that will serve the needs of *Sadhviji's* and *Shravaks* who seek spiritual advancement.



Over the last close to 5 decades (47 years, see picture of 1st sermon) of its existence, *Acharya Shriji Chandanaji* has shown the vision and courage to keep helping people in need without ever worrying about how a task will get done.

After a major earthquake in Gujarat, India in 2001, *Veerayatan* rushed to *Bhuj-Kutch* area to assist in rebuilding efforts; Started with building an elementary school and expanding with middle, schools, high schools and then with several colleges offering Graduate level programs in various disciplines with world class residential and educational facilities.

After the earthquake in Nepal in 2015, *Veerayatan* rushed to *Kathmandu* to offer humanitarian help and then started building an elementary school. (A [short 22 minutes Video "Ek Adhyaya Aur"](#), tells it all).

JSCNC – A BIRTHPLACE FOR THE “GIFT-OF-SIGHT” PROGRAM

In 1998, *JAINA* (Federation of Jain Associations in North America) had arranged for a *Samet Shikarji YATRA* to India with a specific major goal to celebrate *Veerayatan's* 25th anniversary. Many *JSCNC* members participated in the *YATRA*. *JSCNC* was searching for a relevant *Veerayatan* cause to donate for the occasion. The emerged idea was to raise \$10,000 for the *NJSM (Netra Jyoti Seva Mandiram)* an eye clinic that provides free eye treatments, primarily cataract surgery to all patients. In addition, the members, primary driver *Arvind Shah* of Raleigh, decided to make this an annual ritual with donation to *NJSM* every year. With that pious objective, the program “[Gift-of-Sight](#)” was born. Under this program a family wishing to participate, registers the family members one time, with their respective birthdates. Members are encouraged (optional) to make a donation on their respective birthdays to support eye treatment(s). Since the donation is sought on the

donor's birthday, the slogan “Give the Gift of Sight on the Day you Saw the Light” was



adopted and is in use today after more than 20 years. “A Happy Birthday”, wished with a gentle reminder for the Eye donation is sent to participants every year. The program born in **JSCNC** is operating U.S. wide and has helped improve the vision of many needy and deserving people in the state of *Bihar*. A thought born in **JSCNC** helps thousands of patients now.

Donations since 1998 are shown in the graph above:

JSCNC ENGRAVED IN “ADINATH NETRALAYA” PALITANA

Veerayatan opened an elementary school (2017) and an eye clinic (2019), in *Palitana*. The school is adding one more grade every year as students advance to the next grade and currently has Grades 1-7 with a total student population of over 200. All of the students belong to the peasant families, including the “*Doliwala’s*”, who can’t afford to send their kids to school. Built in *Palitana*, near *Shetrunjay*, this is another step forward in keeping with Veerayatan’s theme of “जहां जीनालय वहां विद्यालय”.



For the eye clinic’s (“*Adinath Netralay*”) operating rooms, *Veerayatan* sought six sponsors. **JSCNC** was one of the proud sponsors. For this generous cause, **JSCNC**’s name is permanently engraved in the “*Netralaya*”, in the lobby near the entrance to operating rooms.

JSCNC IS BLESSED

We are fortunate to have been blessed with several visits by *Acharya Shri Chandanaji*, *Yuvacharya Shubhamji Maharaj* and *Sadhviji Sanghamitraji*. *Acharya Shri Chandanaji* and various *Sadhviji's* visit U.S.A. frequently and specifically attend the biannual *JAINA* conventions. In the last 2019 *JAINA* convention, *Acharya Shri Chandanaji* was bestowed with the "JAINA Presidential Award for outstanding Leadership and Contribution to the World Community and JAINA". *Sadhviji Sanghamitraji* in her *pre-sadhvi "Sansarik "* life, lived in North Carolina for 20 years. She took *Diksha* in 2011 at *Ragjir*, India and final (*Vadi*) *Diksha* in 2012 at San Francisco, U.S.A. In 2015, *Sadhviji Sanghamitraji* visited us in NC and mesmerized **JSCNC** members and others with her melodious *STAVANS* program. In 2019, she was accompanied by *Shri Jay Jain* who performed the *Shatavdhan* program. *Shatavdhan* is where a *Shatavdhani* is presented sequentially with up to one hundred questions or statements on any subject, mixed with objects, pictures or any random items. Then, the *Shatavdhani* is asked randomly what a specific numbered question/item was. *Shatavdhani* identifies the specific question or the item in its numbered sequence; and if it was a question, also tries to answer the question.

In 2019, **JSCNC** members sponsored more than 34 students in the *Palitana School*. Sponsorship includes student's education, uniform, snacks/lunch, and transportation which cost \$425.00 per year.

We (**JSCNC**) hope to continue to support these humanitarian activities which help so many needy students in their education and so many patients who get their vision corrected through the **JSCNC** born "Gift of Sight" program.

The local Veerayatan contacts are *Mayur Lodaya* (mayurplodaya@yahoo.com 919-308-0468) and *Madhuker Mehta* (mamehta@veerayatan-intl.org 617-633-2870).

MEMBERS REFLECTIONS

**The articles shared are the personal opinions of the individual author.

Journey 2.0

BY ADITI AND RITESH SALOT (SOME HELP FROM AARAV)

Jai Jinendra,

Some of life's big challenges are forced upon us, others we choose for ourselves.

A new challenge of life began when we chose to relocate to the US. We came to Cary bringing so many good memories from India at the same time too many questions in the mind. The most important thing for us was to embed yourself in the society you are living in, and to be a productive member without losing your identity and values. It was a whole new journey we call it **Journey 2.0**.

The center point of this phase of life was our son's growth in different areas like social, emotional, and educational. One of the most important things was how do we all keep in touch with Jainism so that we never forget our roots and all "sanskars" which we can learn being part of our culture.

Thankfully by God's grace, we never had to go through any such challenges. We were lucky to come across so many good people who made us comfortable on this new land. We still have memories of visiting HSNC temple as our everyday habit. And then one day, we got introduced to Rekha Ben. She guided us how **JSCNC** functions here in Cary, and kindly invited us to join the monthly Jain meeting. We were so happy to know about **JSCNC** as if we had received some precious gift on Paryushan time.

India is still where our heart beats because we grew up there and all of our family members live there but having **JSCNC** we feel lucky for having an extended family here.

There are so many incidents where we felt very thankful to be part of this wonderful community of **JSCNC**. We would like to highlight one particular incident here.

To buy a house is always a dream for everyone. All your emotions are attached strongly to it. When we bought our new house in Pune, we believed in bringing Bhagwan home and doing Snatra Pooja. Same way we were thinking of doing it here when we bought a house in Cary. To make that possible we asked help from Arvind Bhai and he agreed to do pooja in seconds. He came with everything we needed for Pooja and made our home a holy place. Thanks to many other community members who participated in that Pooja, making our special day more special and memorable. Pravin Bhai whose words we always admire, also came at our place taking out time from his busy schedule to bless us.

We did this Pooja without parents. Surely, we missed them but having parents like figures who blessed us with their presence truly felt like we are having extended family here in the US.

I (Ritesh Salot) consider myself blessed when I have had the honor of serving as the President of **JSCNC** for the past two years (2019-2020). The first few weeks as a president have been a

whirlwind. Many of the committee members including me, feeling afraid, uncertain about the future. But at the same time, excited to learn, to understand and to be transformed. As a result, in the last two years **JSCNC**'s light shone exceedingly bright, which makes it a pleasure to be part of this wonderful community.

The way I see **JSCNC** is a place where we can articulate and examine our values, a place where we can find companions in being accountable to our highest selves.

We would like to extend our thanks to all the community members for helping, advising, and blessing us.

We wish **JSCNC** A Very HAPPY 40th ANNIVERSARY.

WE LOVE JSCNC
BY AJAY AND JAYSHREE SHAH

We are so blessed to be part of **JSCNC**. It is our extended family. After living and educating in India and with several years of work experience, we moved to Raleigh in 2001. At our age in 2001, we felt it would be very difficult. However, upon moving here, we immediately felt like a home and became part of the **JSCNC** family.

Leaders and founders always gave opportunity to new members to lead and actively participate. Greatest feature of **JSCNC** is that each event or program including Mahaveer Jayanti, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Camp, Picnic, Diwali celebration etc. are self-supported.

We are so blessed to have so many scholars to enrich our knowledge about Jainism.

This is the truly awesome selfless community I have ever experienced.

SHAPED BY COMMUNITY

BY AKASH SHAH

I have always spent my life looking for a community and sense of belonging. I was born in western Connecticut where both the Indian and Jain community was very small. In CT, a group of 5 or 6 families (mostly my own relatives) met at someone's house once a month to practice Jainism. Moving to North Carolina in 2005 changed everything for me and my family. Being around a larger community of people that looked like me and shared my values and my culture was formative for me during my school kid years. It was a completely different experience being in a temple with a murti, a sangh with so many families, and most importantly to be around other Jain kids my age.

I can distinctly remember spending every year counting down the days to Camp Lalit. Staying up late telling jokes and playing football at Camp Lalit are to this day some of my fondest childhood memories. I am so thankful for all the friendships I made through JSCNC and for the countless number of sleepovers and hangouts over the years. These relationships still resonate for me in adulthood and it is amazing to see all the incredible things that each and every one of us is doing out in the world.

As I grew older, I became more interested in Jainism from an intellectual and organizational perspective. I have always been encouraged greatly by members of our sangh to pursue these ideals fully. There would be no way that I would have been on Young Jains of America's executive board twice and launched many national Jain initiatives if not for the education and relationships at JSCNC. I am incredibly thankful for my pathshala teachers Purvi and Rita Aunty for teaching me about Jainism and for Hetali and Pavak for pushing me to get more involved in the larger, national Jain community. I'd also like to thank Pravin Uncle for always being willing to answer all of my questions about Jainism no matter how obtuse they may have been.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone at the sangh for always embracing me and making me feel at home. When it comes to JSCNC, I've always felt that I had a community of parents and grandparents that were always looking out for me. It's been over four years since I moved away from North Carolina and I miss our community dearly. Every time I am back home and get to come to a Jain Meeting it is incredibly heartwarming to reconnect with everyone. It is also wonderful to see the new younger generation experience the same support and love that I received growing up. What we have as a community is special and I am really proud to see all the things we have done over the years. I would like to extend my deepest congratulations to JSCNC for 40 wonderful years. I look forward to seeing everyone soon!

JSCNC - AN INTEGRAL PART OF MY LIFE

BY ANERI BHAIRAV SHAH

I remember my mom and dad bringing me to Jain meetings and Pathshala classes from an early age. I often used to wonder why they would drag me to another “school” on the weekends. My thinking began to change in a few years as my parents encouraged me to participate in meetings, Mahavir Jayanti programs, and other events. The more I spoke in front of our community, the more I participated in skits, musicals, and dances, and the more I interacted with the community in general, I began to feel a sense of confidence and belonging to the **JSCNC** community.

As time went by, I was given even more opportunities in the form of being a choreographer in several Mahavir Jayanti programs for kids of different age groups, volunteering in highway cleanups, as a financial assistant in the CROP Hunger Walk, and as an admin in the newly formed **JSCNC** Assistance Program (JAP).

Doing all this did not just boost my confidence, but it taught me to be patient (from working with kids), selfless (from volunteering), and compassionate (from participating in humanitarian programs).

All of my experiences through **JSCNC** impacted me positively in my personal life as well. I have been participating in school musicals, interacting, and openly communicating with new people, and even seeking new opportunities to help others in our local community.

To say thank you to **JSCNC** really falls short of all the things this community has given me. **JSCNC** has taught me so much, while providing me the chance to get to know some of the most generous and kind-hearted people. I am so lucky to be a part of such a distinguished community. The **JSCNC** community will always be in my heart, no matter where I go.

HAPPY 40TH ANNIVERSARY!!

THE IMPACTFUL JSCNC

BY ARNAV BHAIKAV SHAH

How has the Jain Study Center of North Carolina (**JSCNC**) impacted me? This may just be one question, but it has many different answers. When I was younger, I had stage fright and a fear of public speaking. But, as I started to recite sutras and poems during the monthly meetings, Mother's Day Celebrations, Father's Day Picnics, and even participating in Mahavir Jayanti plays, I could really feel my stage fear diminish drastically. It has even helped me in school when I have had to give presentations. I am way more confident in what I am saying and presenting.

Not only has my public speaking improved, but **JSCNC** has also helped me realize what our religion means and how to incorporate it into my daily life. It has shown me how to respect others' viewpoints and that all living beings, including animals, deserve a life. Recently, I have really enjoyed and appreciated the chance to build a new website for our community and I had a wonderful time interacting with members from the committee.

JSCNC has helped me grow into a better, caring, and compassionate human being.

Happy 40th Anniversary!! And all the best to **JSCNC** for many many years to come!!

KAMALA NIVAS GHAR DERASAR BY ARVIND AND ARUNA SHAH

Our house is named Kamala Nivas, named after my late mother. My childhood home in Vankaner, Gujarat had a lake on one side, a Masjid on the other side, and it was across the street from the Jain Temple. My mother pushed us to go to the Derasar every day. We were a very small Jain community in town and Derasar was a MUST in our daily life. That sanskar from my mother together with the spiritual uplifting here at **JSCNC** inspired us to have a Derasar in the house we built in 1995 at Stage Ford Road.

When this house was first built, the area for religious worship was very small, only a four by four-foot nook. However, we told the builder to tear down that part of the framework, move the office to the basement, and instead build a large, dedicated room for the Ghar Derasar.



There are four main murtis. We got all the murtis from India and did the pratishtha on December 2nd, 1995 Magshar Sud 11 (Maun Ekadashi), which is considered auspicious with most Kalyanaks on that day. We cannot believe the amazing spiritual atmosphere this Derasar has created! It has given us the happiest time all these 25 years. We wake up at 5 am and first do the darshan and start Navkar mantra dhoon. The whole atmosphere has a special vibration. We do Ashtaprakari Bhav pooja every day, Aarti & Mangal divo in the mornings and evenings, Chaitaya vandan, Guruvandan, stavans etc. It gives us a wonderful feeling that can only be experienced and cannot be expressed in words.

We have benefited in numerous ways from having this Derasar within our home to pursue our spiritual aspirations. In the beginning, we had about 42 relatives in town, so we used to get together often for many Poojas. So many friends and family continue to obtain Laabh from coming to this Derasar for daily Paryushan Samayik/Pratikraman. We do a yearly

Mahavir Vaanchan. Samvatsari Pratikraman always draws over 125 people from the community. It is a place to reflect and learn, for old and new generations alike.

One time we were thinking of moving to a smaller house, but our conscious said “no”. I said to Aruna, “I was born on 13th, I left India on the 13th and this is my 13th home address in life, so I am going to leave this world from this address. It’s final.”

It is known in the samaj and amongst friends that all are welcome to come and do darshan, aarti/divo, anytime at all.

I would sincerely like to thank **JSCNC** for providing a strong basis for Jainism in our life and for the community to participate in the Derasar’s spirituality.

EFFECT OF JSCNC ON ME BY ARVINDBHAI SHAH

Our heartiest congratulations to Jain study center of NC on its 40th birthday. We are very proud that we were part of its growth and success. Let me take this opportunity to discuss how the Jain society has impacted our family.

Forty-five years ago, I was troubled by a number of existential questions. What happens before birth, what happens after death, and, of course, what is the purpose of life? These questions have troubled mankind for thousands of years and people in different parts of the world have answered it in their own way and called it their religion. I joined the Hindu society of NC to understand the Hindu's way of explaining these questions. Later I joined the Jain study center, which had been started by my good friends Mr. Pravin Shah, Late Ramesh Fofaria, Lalit Banker, and Dr. Mahesh Varia, etc., to understand the Jain point of view. Our discussions in monthly gathering, meeting/discussions with Late Acharya Sushil Muni and Mr. Dhirajlal Mehta, seminars on comparative religions, and one to one discussion with Mr. Pravin Shah led me to realize that all religions have similar questions and goals. You select one according to your social responsibilities and your personality. All show a path to reduce anger, ego, deceit, and greed and increase love towards all of God's creations. Each has different priorities and perspectives on the religious path, but the end result is very similar. This has caused me to look at the world, people, and all living beings in a more empathetic way.

From a community point of view, the Jain study center provided wonderful youth activities and weekend camps, where my children, Sunjay and Nilam, participated. In these sessions they developed their presentation skills and how to discuss religion respecting all points of view. **JSCNC** members also participated in making the "Habitat for Humanity" community project successful as well as the Mahatma Gandhi statue installation in Raleigh possible.

The members of the Jain society are very dedicated, and we wish the society all blessings and continued success in the future.

दर्शन मूलं अरिहंत
ध्यान मूलं सिद्ध प्रभु
वचनं मूलं जीनेश्वर
मोक्ष मूलं रत्नत्रयम्
जय त्रिशला नंद जय महावीर
हे त्रिशलानंद तुम्हे प्रणाम... जय त्रिशला नंद
राज पाट सब छोड दीया और
संयम मार्ग लीया
ओ कृपाळु कृपा करो अब
हम भी चले वहां... जय त्रिशला नंद
अष्ट कर्म पर वीजय पाके
सत्य पथ दीखलाया
वीतराग के चरण कमळ में
कोटी कोटी प्रणाम... जय त्रिशला नंद
उपसर्गों का, परिषहो का
स्वीकार करके दीखाया...
आत्म शुद्धि करके अपना
सिद्ध स्वरूप बनाया... जय त्रिशला नंद

JSCNC: FROM FRIENDS TO FAMILY

BY AVNI SHAH

Many of my first memories in North Carolina and my childhood were founded firmly in the experiences I had through **JSCNC**. Our community was where I was introduced to most of my first friends and kickstarted my appreciation for our culture and heritage. I can distinctly remember younger years filled with playdates and sleepovers straight after monthly meetings and sitting in the temple study room reading Jain stories in Paathshala. Our teachers Rita Auntie and Purvi Auntie were instrumental in providing us all with real ways to apply Jain practices to our lives and foster more compassionate communities around us.

Some of my favorite memories through **JSCNC** are the volunteer programs for adults and kids alike whether it be through the soup kitchen, a highway cleanup, or interfaith walks. Besides being fun events, these were moments in my life that showed me the value of the 'seva' and service we do in our neighborhoods, and its impact on not just others in our communities but on our own souls as individuals. It's a lesson that I carry with me today and has greatly informed how I view the world and the potential we all have as singular people to foster good.

No matter how far I end up from home, the **JSCNC** community is always there to welcome me back with open arms. Each year as I return a little older and wiser, it becomes more and more evident how the impact of growing up in such a close knit community has fostered a deeper connection with faith that has played an important role in who I am today.

Thank you to all the amazing members of our community, many of whom I consider as extended family now, who have worked so hard to keep the wonderful programs and education going for so many years. Congratulations to **JSCNC** for an incredible 40 years! I can't wait to see everyone soon and celebrate!

BLOSSOMING IN THE LIGHT OF JSCNC BY BHAIRAV AND SEJAL SHAH

On this occasion of the celebration of 40 years since the advent of the Jain Study Center of North Carolina (**JSCNC**), we can't help but reflect how this organization has helped us grow as human beings.

Let's take it from the beginning.

I came to Raleigh for my undergraduate studies in 1991 from Kenya and was fortunate to have a caring family in Naliniben, Jagdishbhai (my masi-masa) and my cousin, Poorvi Shah. Masa-masi were (and still are) regular members of **JSCNC**. I came to know the members of **JSCNC** through them, and the members knew me as the nephew of Naliniben and Jagdishbhai.

At the time, I was not a regular, nor participating in any **JSCNC** events. As many people probably knew, I was just too shy, and more importantly, not interested.

As time went by, I got married to my lovely wife, Sejal Shah, and had two amazing children, Aneri and Arnav. This is the time when Sejal and I really started to think about how we wanted to raise our children. Living in a foreign country, we could have raised them without any exposure to Jainism or the Jain *sangh*. But something in us kept turning us towards this fine community. Wanting to learn Jainism, a longing to be part of a community of Jains, and a strong desire to teach our children the same, were the main ingredients that pushed us towards **JSCNC**.

As we started becoming "regulars" at **JSCNC**, we realized it was more than just a place to learn Jainism. We started to get to know its amazing members - friendly to all, diligent in serving their community, and helpful to anyone and everyone. **JSCNC** started to feel like home to us.

Let's take a side-bar.

As we got to know the various members of **JSCNC**, we began to learn about **JSCNC**'s history as well. It is a testament to the founding members of this community on how they and the members of Hindu Center of North Carolina (HSNC), worked together to add idols of many Hindu Gods, along with Mahavir Bhagwan's *murti*, at the HSNC Temple in Morrisville - likely, among the first multi-religious Temples in the USA! It is a testament to them for starting **JSCNC** in the small, relatively unknown, towns of Raleigh, Cary and Chapel Hill. It is a testament to them for bringing together all Jain sects into ONE Jain group. All we can say about these founding members is that they were visionaries, and the decisions and steps they took in the early days of **JSCNC** can be felt even today. *Khoob khoob anumodna* (our heartfelt and utmost gratitude) to them.

Back to the story ...

As our children started to grow up, **JSCNC** graced them with opportunities to recite stavans, speak, and even participate, in various skits and songs in front of the community and large crowds. We cannot begin to describe the confidence and skills they gained by these participations. And as they continued to learn the basics of Jainism in their Pathshala classes, Sejal and I felt that these learnings would help them become humble, compassionate, and all around better human beings, wherever they might go or be in the future.

Although we expected that our children would learn something, we had no idea that it would be a learning experience for us as well. We have learned how to be humble, how to contribute, and how to work together as a community towards a common goal. I feel like I lost my shyness by getting the same opportunities that my children got. However, we did not figure all this out on our own. It was with the guidance of our seniors and previous leaders who patiently showed us the path. We feel so lucky to be members of such a distinguished community.

As time progressed, both Sejal and I were afforded multiple opportunities to serve our community. Sejal has been a committee member for several years, a Pathshala teacher (almost 10 years!) and recently, the Director. Sejal has also had the fortune to co-lead several Mahavir Jayanti programs, including choreographing dances and musical skits. Since 2017, she has even had the privilege to be the coordinator for Jain Education Workshops conducted over WebEx by Pravinbhai K. Shah, and as a committee member of Jain Blogs, also led by Pravinbhai Shah.

I have also had the privilege to serve as the Secretary from 2014 and then the President of **JSCNC** up to 2018. Recently, I have been serving as an advisor to the 2019-2020 committee, and, along with Pritesh Shah and Kamlesh Shah, am one of the founders of the **JSCNC** Assistance Program (JAP). But I just cannot stay away from technology and thus have been graced with opportunities to lead the Audio/Visual support team during Mahavir Jayanti and other events. Finally, it is with great pleasure that I am able to help Pravinbhai and Sejal with technical support during their virtually held Workshop sessions on WebEx.

There is no other way to put it, except that, this Shah family has blossomed in the sunlight of **JSCNC!**

In its forty years of history, **JSCNC** has impacted generations of our community in a way that just cannot be measured. As the next generation, we aspire to continue the vision of the Jain Study Center of North Carolina imbued by its founders, for many more years to come.

The **JSCNC** community will always hold a special place in our hearts. In a country where we are immigrants, **JSCNC** has truly become our home away from home.

HAPPY 40TH ANNIVERSARY!!

MY JAIN FAMILY BY BHAVIK MODI

The **JSCNC** community has been an incredibly formative part of my childhood that continues to have a lasting impact on who I am today. Ever since becoming involved, I found a group of friends with similar interests and values. We were able to connect in an environment that promotes learning and camaraderie, while also being able to express ourselves at monthly meetings and Mahavir Jayanti. For years, the community felt like an extended family. We bonded at events such as the annual Jain Camp and the Father's Day Picnic. I remember when the entire community came together to raise more than \$1,000 to support childhood cancer research when I advocated for St. Baldrick's. The outpour of donations was so touching and generous. The Jain values that were instilled in me in Paathshala keep influencing my character to this day. I am so grateful for the **JSCNC** community and look forward to seeing it continue to grow and thrive.

A LIFE'S BETTER WITH JAINISM BY BHAVIN SHAH

We have been a part of the Jain community for over 15 years. Our son Soham has been attending the pathshala since he was four years old. For the last nine years, he attended pathshala and the Mahavir Jayanti program every year.

We got inspired by all the knowledgeable people in the Jain community and Scholars. We participate and volunteer during major functions like Mahavir Jayanti, and my son takes part in the pooja and cultural programs. His knowledge of Jainism has grown since then. He has given up all food that contains eggs and gelatin. For example, he makes sure to ask if the cake at his friend's birthday party has eggs, and if it does then he will not eat it.

For the last two years, my son Soham has been playing tabla for the Mahavir Jayanti puja. The **JSCNC** has developed a fantastic curriculum with the best volunteer teachers. We cannot imagine living in a community where there are no Jain social and cultural activities.

A LETTER TO MY JAIN COMMUNITY

BY CHARLENE MARIA JAIN

Happy 40th Anniversary!

Jai Jinendra to my Aunties, Uncles, Sisters, Brothers, Nieces, and Nephews!

My connections with the Jain Study Center of North Carolina all started on May 25, 1996, when Mahendra and I were married at the Mandir. Many of you were there, and I remember your faces clearly as if it were yesterday. From then on, every time we traveled to North Carolina from Chicago, it seemed as if we were commemorating a family event with **JSCNC**. Whether you welcomed Ajay and Sona into the community, or joined us in celebrating Raja and Nevran's wedding reception, or wrapped your arms around us at Dad's funeral, you were always there for us as our large, extended family.

Personally, I have felt extraordinarily welcome there. For the past 24 years, people sincerely and wholeheartedly have wanted to make my acquaintance. Everyone there accepts me for who I am, even if I am from a different culture and ethnicity. I consider myself only a partial Jain, which by my definition means that I do not always understand all the prayers or philosophies of Jainism. For me, the beauty of Jainism is in the simplicity of its 5 precepts. It is, and it will always be.

My vision and hope for this "welcoming place" is for you to continue to be that "welcoming place". During these troubled times, it is especially important that those who are not like us feel welcome, feel comfortable, and feel safe. I know from experience that strangers can enter your doors and feel at home just as you have made me feel these past 24 years.

My love to all of you!
Jai Jinendra!

TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

BY DEEPAK AND NIRUPA PAREKH

Nirupa and I moved to the Triangle area back in August of 2013 with the intention of retirement. We stayed in an apartment for a few months while we were looking for a house of our choice. We were in the process of downsizing and were looking for a small-town house. This was a new area for us and did not know many people. My first contact was with Madhukerbhai Mehta. He was the first person who told me about the Jain Center in this area. We were advised to purchase a house in the Morrisville area and closer to Hindu Temple. We did buy a house of our choice in November of 2013. We are just about 1,5 miles from the Hindu Temple.

We have been very closely associated with **JSCNC** since our move to NC. We take a very active part in all activities of **JSCNC**. We normally travel to India every winter for about 4 months but when we are in this area we attend all activities of **JSCNC**. We are fortunate to have scholars like Pravinbhai Shah, Maheshbhai Varia and Ramnikbhai Zota. We consider ourselves very lucky to be part of this very active and lively group. We made many friends in a very short time and that's because of very friendly members of **JSCNC**. They welcomed us with open arms and accepted us like part of the family in a very short time. Our transition became much easier when **JSCNC** members stood with us.

I was Jain by my birth but by my karma I was far from that. I became aware of Jainism by my association of many learned members and attending all lectures by various visiting scholars. Now I am a regular member of Tuesday Swadhaya group which is led by R Zota. My life has changed forever by gaining a true knowledge of Jainism by attending all these various activities conducted by **JSCNC**. Nirupa and I sincerely thank one and all members of this group for everything they have done for us. Now we are one of them and not outsiders.

JSCNC – A LIFETIME TO REMEMBER

BY DIMPLE, KIARA & RAJ SALECHA

It seems like it was just a couple of years back!! It's been 7 long years since we left NC (2013) to relocate to Ann Arbor, MI and then we moved to Los Angeles, CA.

The **JSCNC** community had been like our 2nd home after India. The community was big but at the same time small enough to know each and every one by their names. Monthly gatherings and knowledge sharing were something that we still miss. Cordial affection and the grace of all seniors in the community has kept us still connected to **JSCNC**. The modesty of all gave us the feel of family that we missed being far from India.

NC is the place we met *Pravinbhai & Artiben* Shah and got associated with the Jain Library work and which we continue to do. The learning that started in **JSCNC** continues and for which we are so very thankful to **JSCNC**. **JSCNC** is where we got introduced to English *Pratikraman* and we continue to follow it every *Samvatsari* ever since.

Pravinbhai and *Sudhirbhai* introduced us to Veganism and now they are our inspiration for us to be on the path of *Ahimsa* lifestyle. Sometimes we feel, why we did not know about it earlier.

Madhukerbhai & Gitaben introduced us to the “Gift of Sight” program for Veerayatan and that has led us to keep on serving many such initiatives.

Dr. Sunil Anchalia's devotion and faith in serving has kept us motivated. *Kamleshbhai's* organizational skills are something that we still try to apply. *Harshadbhai's* unwavering service to his wife are traits that we still revere. *Sejalben* and *Ritaben's* dedication towards *Pathshala* has kept us motivated to link with the local *Pathshala* wherever we moved.

We received the warmth of grandparents from *Shri Sampatji & Sumitraji* Jain and miss the friendly neighbors like *Sunilji & Neenaji* Jain. In addition, many more loving and beautiful friends that we came across and were lucky to have met them during our two years of short stay in NC and in the **JSCNC** community.

JSCNC is where we also get to celebrate our Jain festivals regardless of sect. This new way was unknown for us. Bias-free atmosphere with the goal of learning true Jainism and applying it in life is what we experienced at **JSCNC**. Memorable times of preparations for Mahavir *Jayanti*, *Diwali*, Father's Day & Mother's Day picnics and *Paryushan* celebrations are as fondly thought of as of the actual event.

Interaction with many Jain scholars at **JSCNC** is still fresh and have kept us linked with them all the while. We remember many connections that we made at the **JSCNC** community and happily cherish the moments with them.

Camp Lalit was one of the memorable gatherings and an event like that we miss everywhere. We wish that it continues for years to come.

In this year of 2020, we congratulate the **JSCNC** group on completing forty years as an active Jain, Social and family community. Along with that, we pray for everyone's safety and well-being in this tough time of pandemic.

We are very thankful to all for accommodating us to be part of the **JSCNC** community. Please visit us if you are in Santa Monica, CA - we would love to meet you all.

BUILDING LEADERS, ROLE MODELS, AND LIFELONG FRIENDS

BY DINA C. FIFADRA

In the fall of 1997, I attended my first **JSCNC** meeting. I was a freshman at UNC-Chapel Hill, my parents (*Madhuker and Gita Mehta*) had just moved from Florida to Durham, and I was serving on the YJA national board as the Southeast Regional Coordinator. I remember how uneasy I felt in a new state and being on a college campus I had never seen. On top of it, maybe, at the time, I did not appreciate the fact that my parents would also be on a journey of their own as they moved to North Carolina. As I entered this pivotal stage in my own personal development, I never would have imagined the role that **JSCNC** would play in keeping me grounded and close to my roots.

In September 1997, my YJA co-chair, *Ameet Shah*, and I made the decision to host a regional YJA convention over Thanksgiving weekend in RTP. I was unsure how in only a matter of months we would accomplish the daunting tasks of publicizing the event, determining the costs for registering, hosting out-of-town attendees, catering (tasty) Jain food for multiple days, soliciting engaging speakers, etc. I had just graduated high school, and I had never taken on this type of coordination and responsibility for others. Looking back, I learned about the power of a motivated group of parents and youth volunteers. We came together to create a memorable, educational, and inspirational weekend, and in retrospect, it is a testament to the fact that **JSCNC** has played an important role in my life in three key areas:

1. **Leadership Development.** I work in product management at Amazon. Organizing tasks, working across various groups, and delivering a successful product on time is a critical component of my job, and I got my first taste in how to do that well when we hosted the 100-member youth conference in RTP.
2. **Community.** **JSCNC** is more than a community, it is family. My parents were newcomers in 1997, knew very few people in the area, and were starting life anew in their 50's. Now, having spent over 20+ years in North Carolina, my parents are regular faces within this *Samaaj (Community)* and have a more active Jain social network than we even do! For me, while I was in college, I could count on both my parents and their **JSCNC** friends to come out and support events that I was working on, be it charity concerts or dance competitions (yes, organizing events continued to increase in scale after that initial YJA conference). It should not surprise me that these same friends came together approximately 10 years later to help us plan yet another milestone event for me in North Carolina - my wedding.
3. **Seva.** In Jain Pathshala, we learn about *Seva* and giving in service to help others. In recent years, my parents have given much of their time to a noble cause, Veerayatan, which promotes *Seva, Shiksha, and Sadhana*. **JSCNC** has come together to also support Veerayatan, but selfishly, the best "*Seva*" I have witnessed, is how the community always comes together to support each other – through weddings, baby showers, spiritual lessons, yoga classes, and even tragic losses. Living so far from NC, my siblings and I find much comfort that **JSCNC** demonstrates the values of *Seva* through how they have cared for my parents in any time of need, without fail.

I am thankful to the role that **JSCNC** has played in making me the person I am today, and giving me so many mentors and role models for the people I aspire to be when I grow up.



YJA 2nd South East Regional YJA Convention
Radisson Hotel, Research Triangle Area (Raleigh, NC)

GOD BLESS JSCNC
BY HARSHAD C. SHAH

My wife *Jyotsna* and I moved to Raleigh, NC in 2005 for retirement. We lived for 30 years in other parts of North Carolina like Lumberton and Morganton. During these years we were associated with Charlotte Jain Center and Hindu Center. We are thankful to almighty and our KARMODAYA that we chose Raleigh as our final retiring destination.

We had heard and attended many **JSCNC** functions prior to moving to Raleigh. However, the true love, blessings, social and *Adhyatmik* opportunities were discovered after the real move. Since I was retired, we were able to participate in many social and more importantly religious activities. The weekly Jain *Swadhyays* and Classes, many religious Hindu and Jain activities kept us so busy all the time. We were busier in our retired life than the preretirement. With having good social relations with all the communities, I was asked to be a liaison person between the **JSCNC** and HSNC (Hindu Society of North Carolina). I am thankful to both **JSCNC** and HSNC for allowing me to serve in this capacity and communities at large.

The heavenly happy life remained, but personal situations started changing. My wife developed terminal disease in 2010. She started going down day by day with diminishing physical abilities. During these difficult days, the **JSCNC** members started giving us more and more generous mental and physical support. We also arranged for an in-home support person from India to not only help with household help and vegetarian cooking, etc., but to take care of *Jyotsna's* personal help too. *Jyotsna* eventually moved to a retirement home. Of course, the vegetarian food was brought to her twice daily from home.

The medical help offered by Dr. *Induben Varia*, moral and physical help by *Madhuker & Gita Mehta*, *Bhairav & Sejal Shah*, *Pritesh & Mira Shah*, *Kamlesh & Jyoti Shah* and of course my unmatched love and help from my daughter *Parul* and my son-in-law *Himansu Shah*. They all helped us with all kinds of help whenever and wherever needed. *Madhuker* was greatly attached to *Jyotsna* as he had the same aged sister *Jyotsna* in India. The team was so helpful, sometimes I thought they were competing among themselves to be the best. With her *Karmodaya*, *Jyotsna* left me behind in this earthly world alone on 10/16/2015.

I became alone in this world, but in reality, **JSCNC** emerged as the best to offer. Besides vast pool of HSNC activities, the **JSCNC** activities like *Swadhyay* by *Ramnik Zota*, Saturday morning *Adhyatmic* education class and Wednesday evening lectures by *Pravinbhai Shah*, monthly meetings, and weekly *Pujas*, *Mahavir Jayanti* Program, *Paryushan* activities (*Pooja*, *Pratikramans*, *Bhavanas*), Scholars' visits/lectures, Annual Camp, Highway Cleanup, and CROP Walk keeps me busier than ever. We have been fortunate to have been blessed with visits by *Acharya Shriji Chandanaji*, *Panditji Dhirubhai Mehta*, *Shri Godhaji*, *Samaniji Dr. Suyashnidhiji* and *Shrutnidhiji*, to name a few and of course our own ex-NC native *Sadhviji Sanghamitraji*.

I was fortunate to visit Veerayatan, Rajgir (Main Campus) in 2005, 2009, 2016. I saw the compassion in action. We visited the onsite eye-clinic (*NJSM – Netra Jyoti Seva Mandiram*) which is partly supported by the **JSCNC** borne "[*Gift of Sight*](#)" program. Also visited the nearby Veerayatan established and managed school in *Lachuar, nearby Rajgir*.

With all the Adhyatmik opportunities for the ultimate path to "*MOKSHA*" that **JSCNC** offers, there is no better place to live. GOD Bless **JSCNC**.

BASIC VALUES IN CURRENT ENVIRONMENT BY HARSHAD VARIA

It's been a privilege to be part of **JSCNC** and being Jain. I have learned a lot from our Jain friends in the local community to listen and act to support local communities; especially in the current global environment of COVID 19 and racism around the world.

We must address a difficult topic, racism, to ensure we are making progress toward racial equality. As many of us have heard, civil unrest and protests have risen in the United States, and around the world. The protestors are fighting to end racism. We hear you, and we are with you.

I feel assured with Jain basic values – “ALL SOULS ARE EQUAL” will affect change, and address the central question of “what can we do?” We have learned basic values from Jainism, diversity, nonviolence, and humanity. We can always learn, and we can act to do better.

Together, we will **SHOW UP** to affect positive change in our communities, we will **LISTEN** to the voices of those previously unheard, and we will **ACT** with love and courage to enable an equal world.

CONGRATS JSCNC BY ILLA DOSHI

Congratulations to **JSCNC** for celebrating their 40th Anniversary. My family and I were fortunate to live in Cary and have the privilege of joining **JSCNC**.

It was a great blessing to be able to participate in the Jain activities for children and adults. My son, then only 8 years old and moving from Canada did not really see the Jain rituals and a Jain temple with all the Hindu Gods. He was fascinated, and loved going to the temple for *Darshan*.

We enjoyed the Mahavir Jayanti program. Every year it was a wonderful inspiration to him to see and learn from children reciting and acting the 14 *Swapnas (Dreams)*.

I personally loved my Swadhyay group where we gathered and read and discussed different scriptures. Pravinbhai was inspirational in this weekly activity. It was my peaceful time with friends and God.

JSCNC invited the Jain monks and scholars from India who came and talked for a few days on specific Jainism topics.

Paryushan was the best time where we always had a wonderful Jain speaker giving us daily discourses. Celebrating the last day with *Parna* for the *Tapasvis* was a fulfilling experience.

Everyone would bring food one item for the *Parna* and we would be there to feed them.

Pravinbhai and the **JSCNC** group would also keep adult *Pratikraman* and a special English *Pratikraman* for the young children and adults. This was a great blessing for us as it was very informative for the children and we had an opportunity to perform a real *Pratikraman* outside of India.



Thank you **JSCNC** for taking care of all our religious needs and helping our children to learn and appreciate Jainism.

Children having a peer group with the same values and understanding that they are all in it together builds their self-esteem and lives to follow the path of Mahavir *Bhagvaan*.

These are just a few things I remember and will cherish forever. Along with these there are many other annual activities like *Diwali* celebrations, Camp Lalit (Million thanks to Late Lalitbhai Banker), Picnics, Father's Day & Mother's Day celebrations and Highway Cleanup (again led by Lalitbhai). In addition, other non-cyclical activities such as Volunteering at the homeless kitchens, *Pathshala* (religious classes for children), Arts and Yoga classes for all ages took place.

We were blessed to be in Raleigh for 25 years and took advantage of **JSCNC** to enrich our lives and learn more about our religion. We have moved to Atlanta now and we miss the **JSCNC**.

Thanking each and every board member and all volunteers who went above and beyond the call of duty. Our Jain temple was a place of worship and **JSCNC** was a caring, loving and peaceful extended family for all of us.

Again, congrats for the job well done. Wishing you 100s of years of the same.

HOW CAN JAINISM HELP US COPE WITH THE CORONAVIRUS?

BY INDU VARIA

The current coronavirus pandemic affects us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Coping with the physical part is straightforward by following the health leaders advice on social distancing, self-isolation, wearing a mask, and hand washing.

The mental and psychological needs can be more urgent than we think. The good news is that the main answer to this is healthy diet, exercise, relaxation, yoga, and meditation. These are the main anti-stress strategies.

Some people are neglecting the spiritual part. How lucky I am to have the Jain Study Center.

JSCNC is helping me by having weekly or twice weekly swadhyays, practicing yoga, and meditation. This brings fulfillment and peace in my life. We will all fight this crisis together. We follow precautions and await developments in rapid testing, treatment and vaccination. The virus is a powerful reminder of our shared humanity.

I am most worried about the unknown factors. How long will the pandemic continue? There is a lot of uncertainty and unknowns. My frustration is about innocent people suffering due to other people not following the precautions. Millions of people are going through so much suffering, especially those who are vulnerable. How many people will die, how many will lose their jobs, how many will suffer?

I follow the precautions. I am wearing a mask, staying six feet away. I do all the precautions. From Jainism I learn that you do all your *purusharth* without expectations. Things change, nothing is permanent, the virus too will pass.

Jainism also teaches us about perspective. When organizations like CDC announce some restrictions, we see it as restrictions but instead we can view it as precautions to keep the community safe and healthy. It's a matter of perspective.

I get a lot of fulfillment with **JSCNC**, a lot of security, it's a big family, and brings inner peace and happiness.

In summary, how do I cope with the coronavirus pandemic? I persevere in my *Purusharth*, I try to maintain Perspective, and accept *Paryaya* (*things change, nothing is permanent, the virus will pass*).

Congratulations to JSCNC on its 40th anniversary.

MY HOME – THE JAIN STUDY CENTER OF NORTH CAROLINA BY ISHAN SHAH

Growing up in America as a Jain; in my earlier years, I felt at odds with the rest of society. When I started school I couldn't explain to my friends why we don't eat pepperoni pizza or a meat sandwich. When I was younger, I simply felt that practicing Jainism was a pain. To be honest, I counted down the minutes until we could get snacks after Pathshala, or I recited only simple sutras at the monthly meeting. However, what I enjoyed most of all was all the recurring social events organized by **JSCNC**. From staying up late for my favorite event, the Jain camp and then eating pancakes in the morning, eagerly asking my parents if I and my friends could play in the playground after the Jain meeting, and performing skits at Mahavir Jayanti – I loved it all!

As the years passed and I grew up, I developed a genuine interest in learning more about how I can be a better person through Jainism and began to enjoy learning more about Jainism in Pathshala. You can probably say that I was heavily influenced by my parents, who endured my endless questions, and patiently answered all of them. The Jain Study Center became more than a place to simply play with other kids; it became like a family and a place of solace. Here I could spend time with people just like me and felt like I belonged to something larger. As I grew, I learned that being Jain was something to be celebrated and began to love our rich heritage. Through years of attending Pathshala, Jain meetings, Jain camps, highway cleanups, Mahavir Jayanti celebrations, Ashtaparakari Pujas, Samvatsari Pratikramans, Crop Walks, and so much more; I learned how to be a more compassionate, and a better person. Through times both good and bad, the teachings of Jainism have always been with me, and for that, I can only thank our wonderful Pathshala teachers, who inspired lifelong Jain values in all the children. And I would like to thank our generous community for fostering a space where children could grow.

On this 40th anniversary of our Jain Center, I want to thank everyone who has helped me become the person I am today and for fostering a lifetime of Jain values. In merely 16 years that I've been a part of the Jain center, I've learned a lifetime's worth of lessons and made lifelong bonds with members, both young and old. I would not trade our Jain community for the world, and the memories I have made throughout the years have been some of my fondest. I have nothing other than deep gratitude for our Jain Study Center of North Carolina and hope that as the years go on, my bonds with both our Jain community and the Jain religion continue to grow.

AS WE LOOK BACK...
BY JAYNITA SHAH

We are one of a very few to be privileged to be born in a Jain family, as a default we have been practicing Jainism in our daily lives. Since our move to NC about 18 years ago, my family started participating in Jain activities and realized to understand the true principles of Jainism. As a first-generation immigrant, it was more adoptable for me throughout my life but our son was born and raised here practicing our religion and its principles. We made him understand the importance of Jainism and of its community.

JSCNC was one and only medium where he learned about Jainism. We attended monthly meetings, Pujas, participation in Mahavir Jayanti programs, Paryushan, Camps, pathsala and gained the basics of Jainism. Specially, the option of doing the savantsari pratikaman during Paryushan in English. Great incentive for anyone born and raised in this country to attend & gain better understanding. Also, over the years, **JSCNC** has provided us a platform to make lifelong, reliable friends.

Over the years we have noticed how diligently all volunteers with **JSCNC** have worked to bring direct difference in people in the community. I had the opportunity to serve as a Treasurer for two years and it was an honor to enhance the base of our Jain activities and religion as a whole for the community.

Even today, after forty years of strong establishment of **JSCNC**, RTP, we need strong volunteers presence, we can imagine how arduous it could be to conceive the thoughts of starting and establish a community based Jain group all these years and how much time and efforts would have been to streamline so that whole community can make direct difference in their daily life, their approach, their thought process and apply Jain principles in their life.

We are extremely proud of **JSCNC**, RTP and especially its contribution to change, enhance Jain people's thought process, follow Jain principles, and try to be decent human beings.

EVOLVING WITH JAINISM

BY JUHI MODI

JSCNC has not only been the hub for some of my fondest memories but a driver for my spiritual development and life philosophy. One reason this Jain community has been so special is because of the family-like bonds that run through all the people. I, like many others, have met such compassionate, selfless, and overall wonderful people here, all while learning so much. The people of this community have been a large part of the reason why experiences from Pathshala to Mahavir Jayanti to Jain Camp to our regular Sunday meetings have always been things to look forward to. It is experiences like these that have not only created memories and characterized my experience with **JSCNC** but have been foundational in the way I understand and attempt to move through life. Everyone's relationship with spirituality and religion looks different and is likely shaped by various forces, but I can say that growing up as a part of **JSCNC** is a large reason why I hold the worldview I currently have. I have been particularly thankful for Pravin Uncle and his lectures that challenge certain lines of traditional religious thought. Hearing new, progressive ideas around the philosophy and practice of Jainism have paved the way for better understanding and accepting my relationship with religion, spirituality, and at the core of it all, Jainism.

YOGA AND JAINISM: A JOURNEY WITHIN

BY JYOTI KAMLESH SHAH (RYT-500)

Coming to this country in the year 1990, we felt the Western culture all around us and felt far away from our home, family and traditions. But just within a couple of months, we were fortunate enough to come across the Jain Study Center and felt welcomed and right at home! Not only us, but our parents and family visiting from India have always felt welcomed at **JSCNC**.

As both our children grew up, they were always surrounded by and getting exposed to the best balance of our culture and traditions, while making friends and learning from those friendships and experiences on how to live a better Jain life.

Jainism principles are centered around non-violence, non-attachment, truth, and compassion. Being a true Jain often is not only about what we do during Paryushan, or Mahavir Jayanti, or other auspicious days. To me, rather, it is more about how and what we practice in our daily lives by putting those principles into action. This can look like different things for different people. For me, it has come in the form of following vegetarianism or veganism, buying cruelty free products, helping those in need, following a routine of spiritual practices, rituals, and learning through Swadhyaya etc.

The uncertainty and sufferings in life is constant. Jainism and JCSNC helped bring some order to this chaos in my life by allowing me to think critically about the lens through which I perceive and respond to troubling times. In the early 2000s, the sudden loss of my father (Vinubhai Doshi) brought a lot of grief in our family and it was very hard to see my mother (Hansaben Doshi) suffering through this loss. We got moral support from the members of the **JSCNC** family and found refuge in our religion. We moved my mother to the US, which was a huge adjustment and a lifestyle change for her. I was thankful for my mom to be here with us specially for both my kids -Mansi and Mihir, who got to spend time with her and learn a lot about everything from family values, connecting to our family's heritage and culture to Jainism. The beliefs and principles of our Jain dharma - mainly non-attachment and compassion - began to make sense and my journey for deeper exploration started at this point. Along with Jainism, I became more involved in yoga & meditation during this period and began my formal yoga teacher training.

In my training, I learned that yoga calms, quiets and stabilizes our mind and body through the practices of pranayama (breath control) and asana practices. My daily practices of yoga and meditation have helped me cultivate balance, focus, and strength to weather the ups and downs of life's experiences.

Jainism and yoga both are independent philosophies and run parallel with each other, but from the perspective of looking inward, both provide a path where the ultimate goal is Samadhi, or Liberation. These two philosophies permeate our daily lives more than we think or understand. Yoga is one of the many ways to put the philosophy of Jainism into practice and make it part of my day to day life.

One of the ways I have seen the connection between yoga and Jainism in practice is

through my experiences teaching yoga to elderly and aged people. I taught yoga at a rehab center, where the patient's lifeless state of body and mind was a heartbreaking experience to see. The people I worked with were either bedridden or in wheelchairs going through physical pain and grief. In working with them, I saw how being led through the smallest of movements, or even just taking one conscious breath would immediately put a smile on their faces. Knowing that I could help ease their pain even slightly and put a smile on their face was an incredibly touching and fulfilling experience, and connected me with my own humanity. Over the years, I have seen this work as an opportunity to give back to the community, both as a citizen and as a Jain.

During my and my family's involvement with **JSCNC**, for over 29 years, **JSCNC** has grown into a large community - it always feels like an extended family! This family has given me an opportunity to contribute by sharing my learnings and practices of yoga, pranayam and mindfulness in regular monthly meetings, weekly swadhyayas, as well as other forums. I have been fortunate enough to have been given the blessings of gurus of both Jainism and yoga and am looking forward to the next chapter of my spiritual journey.

OUR EXPERIENCES WITH THE JSCNC FAMILY BY KALPESH PAREKH AND FAMILY

Coming in from India to Iowa in 2001, me and my family spent 15 cold winters there before my job brought us to Raleigh in 2016. In my first week here, I still remember my awe seeing such a thriving South-Asian community in the Triangle region compared to the Midwest. For us, one of the big driving forces behind our move here was the potential of being a part of the Indian and Jain community and establishing roots of Jainism in our kids – in this regard we were pleasantly surprised by the strength of our community and the positive changes it brought in our lives! Of course, there are many things to be thankful for, but some important themes that come up when thinking about our past few years are:

Supportive – The entire Indian and Jain community accepted us with open arms with everyone willing to help us settle down in the area. I still remember making my first phone call to the president followed by joining the first monthly meeting where we were made to feel right at home. We thought we must have done something right to become a part of such a welcoming extended family...that feeling has only grown stronger as the years have passed.

Deep rooted and thoughtful – Spending a few years here, we now understand the true meaning behind the words – “Study Center” in **JSCNC**. Through meetings, discourses, scholar visits and activities we have studied and learnt so much about the core philosophies of our religion that we may have never learnt otherwise. My family in India was also quite intrigued by things like the English Pratikraman, the Jain e-library, Pathshala material and they want to inculcate those teachings in their own young ones. My reflection is that we are a community of seekers that is both thoughtful and insightful, inspiring us to focus on the right thinking and behaviors to truly follow the path of Jainism.

Future focused – **JSCNC** uniquely positions and promotes kids in all its activities. Especially with “Mahavir Jayanti” and “Pathshala” where special attention was given to our youth. This basic idea of involving children so much undoubtedly helped our kids build stronger roots in our culture and I think will impact their life choices for years to come. I have seen them excitedly participate in cultural programs, learn stutis, get involved in small community activities all because they see their peers sharing the same passion.

Social and Fun – Seriousness aside, we have a little fun as well! Our unique Camp Lalit comes to mind where daylong spiritual activities and overnight stays with Antakshari, Garbasa, humor and great company become memories of lifetime. Our kids also learn from samanijis, engage in creative arts and games and build lifelong friends! Similarly, our picnics and other such events are a place where we engage in some lighthearted activities that keep our bonds strong.

All in all, I am very grateful to be part of such a loving, selfless family. Also, I am honored to be part of the **JSCNC** committee with such a strong foundation laid by community stalwarts – it feels like standing on the shoulders of giants and inspires me to work towards keeping our legacy shining.

THE PLATFORM BY KAMLESH SHAH

I left my hometown Indore in India back in 1988 and arrived at RDU in Nov. 1990 after two years of college in NJ to start work and a new life! Flying in, seeing nothing but green for miles and woods everywhere, I realized this was a very different place. Beautiful, but different! Jyoti, my wife, joined me a month later from the bustling city of Mumbai into this small city with far less people than both of us could remember being around. We had each other and a couple of other friends we knew from my work, but the rest of it all was strange and new.

As a newcomer we would ask around for places which would bring us closer to familiar memories of back home. This usually meant the one or two Indian grocery stores, and maybe a couple of restaurants in the whole area. Then we found the temple, and it felt really good to be able to pray and meet some people from back home. We saw Sharma Aunty and Uncle and they were very kind and welcoming. We came across someone who told us about this Jain group, and we came to our first meeting at someone's house and never had to look back!

Jain Study Center (**JSCNC**) and its then member families were all one small family: kind, loving and making us feel at home, inviting us to their homes, and supporting us as we got to know the area. Life took off from there for us. We started to learn and understand the "study" part of Jain Study Center - although not as formal back then, it all made sense! This was a great mix of traditional and modern approaches to understanding Jainism and there was something for all of us!

We had finally arrived at our new home away from home! We had found "The Platform -- a combination of having the right people, place & the right circumstances together with willingness", which was to be part of our life forever!

We attended these monthly rotating meetings at people's homes. Early 1990s was before the internet & cell phones, and I was fortunate enough to get a chance to learn from Guruji. Yes, Pravin Bhai & Arti Ben were our library before eLibrary! Guruji encouraged me to think about how we can spread the knowledge of Jainism electronically. I was passionate about technology back then as much as I am now. I was lucky enough to find a software for something called a "bulletin board" and **JSCNC** became the first in the world perhaps to set up a bulletin board service back in 1991! Essentially this was a software running on a computer connected via Modem (yes kids, this was Wifi before Wifi or Internet or WWW!) that was "serving" a few books & articles which were scanned and made available electronically. We started to track who was dialing us and from where and we saw people from many parts of the world dial in. We would hear the then popular sound of a modem answering, the phone going off hook (for those who remember that technology) and a book or article would get downloaded! I had never imagined I would get to work on such a cool project! This gave a platform for people who found us, to learn Jainism and be able to get access to material they could never have otherwise!

As a young person back in India, religion often meant going to temple, doing Puja, and attending ceremonies because mom/dad asked me to, or because that is what everyone did. It was the right thing to do and was how we got our introduction to religion in the first place.

Here in Raleigh, both Jyoti and I got our first-hand exposure to intellectual discussions and debate between Dr. Sampat Jain and Guruji during a meeting at someone's house. We learnt about the Jain universe for the first time, and those symbols I took for granted meant something to me finally! Also, we started to attend discourses of scholars. Panditji Dhirajlal was one of them I remembered attending and really trying my best to understand, as his sessions were in Gujarati - not easy for someone who grew up speaking more Hindi rather than Gujarati. We also got the exposure to see Shri Sushil Muniji at the Camp. The late shri Lalit Bhai Banker would run the camp with so much passion & dedication. I had found my lifelong mentor!

Then came the internet world wide web, and once again **JSCNC** was at the forefront! I was lucky enough to be part of this massive phenomena both professionally and personally by registering "Jainism.org" as (may be one of the) first Jain web domains in the world! Guruji, as a pioneer once again, established the first Jain website here at **JSCNC**! This became yet another platform for us to be in touch with each other & an engine for innovation and growth, and Guruji later on established the Jain-eLibrary we all know and love!

Life was moving at its own pace. We moved to Cary from North Raleigh in 1995, to be closer to our work and our friends, as well as temple and community. Mansi, our first child, arrived in that year, and then Mihir arrived three years later. Although we got busy with life, we were fully at peace and at home on this **JSCNC** platform! Once again, we as a family were at home with our **JSCNC** family! We have so much gratitude for everyone who was always there for us. We were already at a perfect place to raise our kids!

Early 2000s were a time of great growth in RTP, as well as **JSCNC**! We saw so many more families move to this area, and join our extended family. We met many more scholars right here locally and learnt a lot from them. Guruji has always been there for us to guide us through thick and thin! Every time any one of our families visited from India, they felt so good about us being here with this **JSCNC** family. This is where our kids found a platform for knowledge, friendships and learnings from pathsala to YJA to Camp to Paryushan to MJ, etc. The pathsala was a fun learning environment for the kids always and a bit of competition did not hurt either!

Fast forward to the last 10 years, **JSCNC** has become relatively big, & more structured as an organization, written constitution, thanks to the opportunity I had to work on it back in 2012-2014 along with many talented professionals here at JCSNC. The pathsala has grown to four classes and around 60 kids! Wow! And some of these kids are just amazing in what they know and how well they articulate the learnings from their teachers! They are fortunate to have this platform! Not only that, we have come together as all Jains in the area with active participation in MJ, Camp Lalit etc.

I now ask myself, would our future generations have the platform they need? Guruji Pravin Bhai, Late shri Lalit Bhai Banker, Dr. Mahesh & Indu Varia and many other leaders in our sangh have had this thought and have always tried to think about this next generation of Jains and leaders. **JSCNC** has come a long way, in terms of size, structure of how we do activities and govern ourselves in the most ethical manner. We are united, well mostly, until it comes time to talk about how we think we should make this platform to be ready for the

next generation. There are diverse views on this, and I offer mine here.

I do think that the next generation could slowly lose the identity of having a platform of their own. This is somewhat apparent in the lack of interest from kids in what we as a center do, once they leave high school, although there are some exceptions. We are fortunate enough to have some young leaders such as Hetali Lodaya who keep this platform alive for other youths across the nation and the world through organizations such as YJA! But all in all we have not been able to attract many late high school & college students to remain involved in our activities and make this platform their own. This is sadly true for many Jain centers here in the USA.

We need to encourage, and allow this next generation to feel welcome, and build a platform of their own, on their own terms! Yes, it is scary at times to let loose or fear our true traditions would go away, but this is exactly the kind of dialogue and opportunity we need to give them! We need them to voice their dissent of traditions which are not relevant in the world we live in and help evolve them to allow those to serve its purpose in today's context. We need to let them use the tools they are most comfortable with to learn and express their views on what it's like to be a true Jain! This next generation would teach us not to be hypocritical, and we need to show openness for those views. **JSCNC** actually is one of the better institutions for that to happen than any other center I am familiar with here in the US.

This new platform needs to be built with youth leadership with some help and support from the rest of the community. We truly are at a cross point and have to beat this inertia we are falling into as a center! We need a platform where these youths can come together both virtually and physically to learn, talk, play, read and debate and have the right environment with the help of visiting scholars and guests and guidance from the parents and family.

Although, we can think of this as a bigger than just **JSCNC** challenge, we can show and lead by example. **JSCNC** has been a pioneer in many aspects of Jain education, and philosophy and we have already bucked the trend of falling into the trap of what some of the other bigger centers fall into, we just need to take that next step. The first and foremost step is the recognition that we do have a need and a true opportunity! We can use technology and data to help guide our direction, so I ask any youth reading this article, or parents & families to have a dialogue about this and help us all in the process to get this going!

We can show and prove to the world that we CAN & MUST build this platform for the future!

BEING A PART OF JSCNC BY KIRIT & JYOTI SHAH

Khub khub anumodna to JSCNC for completing 40 years.

We - Kirit, Jyoti, Naman and Pavak, joined the JSCNC sangh in 2001 and feel so blessed to become part of this wonderful community. We got introduced to lots of unique activities that were for people of all ages, which we attended with the kids and created great memories while learning the jain values. They were the annual camp, the highway cleanup program, the Mother's Day meeting, the Father's Day picnic, the volunteer services at the homeless shelter and the food bank.

Naman and Pavak also really enjoyed taking part in the Mahavir Jayanti celebrations and the snatra pooja. Our teenage boys found out about YJA from **JSCNC** only and YJA brought so many good things to our lives. It is not easy to provide jain sanskar to kids at home, but as part of the **JSCNC** community, kids got hands on experience on what it means to be Jain and became better people because of it. Kirit and I still miss our weekly swadhyay, monthly meetings and the yearly samvatsari pratikraman with you all very much. Every Aayambil Oli we think of all the kids and adults who are doing the Aayambil.

We really looked forward to the scholars visits every year and were fortunate to learn from Pujya Dhirubhai Panditji, Pujya Tarlaben, Swami Shrutpragnaji and other scholars who visited us. From the pioneer families, we really miss Rameshbhai Fofaria and Lalitbhai Banker whose hard work with Pravinbhai and Artiben has made **JSCNC** a very strong community.

We thank you and wish **JSCNC** community to prosper spiritually.

OUR HOME AFTER 30 YEARS ACROSS U.S., CANADA, & JAPAN BY MADHUKER & GITA MEHTA

We were committed to move from Florida to Raleigh, NC in the spring of 1997 after spending twenty years in the U.S. (Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Coral Springs/Parkland Florida), and five years each in Toronto, Canada and Tokyo, Japan. However, we postponed the move to summer of 1997 as our daughter was in her senior year of high school finishing the school in June 1997. We were thrilled and excited to make the move. Before making the move, we had met *Pravinbhai Shah* once in 1992 in Florida. He had briefed us about the **JSCNC**'s Pathshala activities. We were impressed and dreamed of moving to North Carolina. We didn't know anyone else in the community including *Artiben*.

In the 1st week of June 1997, I had a major heart attack and subsequently a major heart surgery in Florida. However, due to employer needs, we had to move to North Carolina in late July of the same year. This was not a simple or temporary move. Our final move from Florida to North Carolina after eighteen years included five years of stay in Japan. All our prior relocation moves included our children with us which allowed us to make friends easily as children start attending school, there is an academic faculty, parents, PTA, etc., that allowed us to make social contacts to meet our needs. As we moved to North Carolina, it was the first time without our children and we were worried how we would make friends, penetrate into established adults circles, clubs, etc.,

Our worries and fear were totally diminished in a very short time. We joined **JSCNC** and all of a sudden, we met many same, kind minded, *Sadharmik* friends. *Paryushan* was observed, within a few weeks after our move to Raleigh. This was the first time we were introduced to Saturday to Saturday *Paryushan* and English *Pratikraman*. Our daughter not only joined UNC, she became the YJA South East Region coordinator. She felt comfortable in a very short time, and along with Amit Shah organized the 2nd South East Regional YJA convention in Raleigh. By the end of 1997, we had socially merged with **JSCNC** so much, we became one of the family members.

We were so much engrossed with **JSCNC**, I served as **JSCNC** Secretary with then **JSCNC** Presidents Late Shri *Rameshbhai Fofaria* in 1998 and *Smt. Nisha H. Padia* in 1999. I was also elected to serve as the **JSCNC** President in the year 2000. We were able to celebrate **JSCNC**'s 20th Anniversary in 1999 and published a hard copy [20th Anniversary Souvenir](#). An electronic copy of the 20th anniversary souvenir is available online for all the members, particularly those who have joined since **JSCNC**'s 20th Anniversary.

My wife Gita, helped in many activities, specially the Food Table for many years. She also held the Food Coordinator position. She is always first and ready to help in all the **JSCNC** meetings to help the host for food preparation and the food distribution at the **JSCNC** meetings and events.

In the year 1998, many **JSCNC** members joined JAINA arranged *Yatra* to India, specifically *Samet Shikharji* and *Veerayatan*. In this regard, a program known as "[Gift-of-Sight](#)" was

introduced to the world with ideas from **JSCNC** members. More details of the program can be found in the [Veerayatan article](#) in this eSouvenir. Apart from the first year, Gita and I have worked with this program since 1998 and are pleased to announce that, this local program is now supported in U.S.A. and Canada for the last 22 years, has raised approximately \$271,000 to support *NJSM* (Netra Jyoti Seva Mandiram) in Veerayatan, Rajgir. In addition, **JSCNC** has also raised \$60,000 in 2018 to be one of the six sponsors for the Operating Rooms in the *Adinath Netralaya* in *Palitana*; we have also raised \$34,000 to support Primary School children's education in *Palitana*. We not only give credit to **JSCNC** members for such overwhelming support for various good causes, but are also thankful to all the members who have allowed us to develop a meaningful path to live with.

I also had the opportunity to work with *Pravinbhai* to support the Jain e-Library related technical and administrative tasks. I held a position in the Executive Committee in the Jain e-Library administration for six years. I have also held positions in Veerayatan's Executive Committee for four years. With limited knowledge and interest in religious activities, the work associated with such causes, has made our living worthwhile. Thanks a lot, **JSCNC**.

On a more personal note, our three children, two sons and a daughter all got married after our move to Raleigh. Our two sons were already attending colleges when we moved here and our daughter started attending UNC. However, all three children got married into Jain families after we moved to North Carolina. All three weddings were traditional Indian style and we needed a lot of social help to manage the weddings. During all the weddings, the **JSCNC** members supported us in ways that we did not experience any wedding related stress. Our relatives visiting from India, could not believe the wonderful social support we have had from the great **JSCNC** members.

Besides India, our birth country, after 30 years of living through various countries, cities in the U.S.A. and literally heart changing events in my life, we came to North Carolina, which is now our home. My wife Gita and I have enjoyed peaceful living in North Carolina with the invaluable *Sadharmik* religious and social support of **JSCNC**. All that we have described here is our mutual experience and have benefited from the **JSCNC**. We love **JSCNC** and members thereof. God bless **JSCNC** and all its members.

SINDHU MA BINDU
FROM MAHENDRA AND INDIRA DOSHI

Jai Jinendra and Pranam to Sakal Sangh. After spending 45 years in Michigan, we moved to North Carolina in August 2014. **JSCNC** welcomed us very warmly. We feel truly fortunate to be a part of **JSCNC**.

Our daughter Avani, son-in-law Nimish, and her in-laws Shri Arvindbhai and Arunaben Shah were instrumental for us in moving here to Raleigh. Since Arvindbhai has Ghar Derasar in his home, we had the privilege of doing Darshan and Bhavana, particularly during Paryushan. We miss Detroit Sangh and Derasar tremendously because we were one of the pioneer families there. JSJD (Jain Society of Greater Detroit) built a beautiful and unique Jain Temple, and it put deep roots in us for our spiritual journey. Someday, we wish to have our own independent Jain Temple here in the Raleigh area as well.

We were extremely fortunate to acquire Jain knowledge over the years through many Jain scholars like Shri Kiranbhai Parikh, Smt. Sunandaben Vohra, Panditji Shri Dhirajlal Mehta, Panditji Shri Champakbhai Mehta, Smt. Tarlaben Doshi, and many sadhus and sadhvis as well. We enjoy weekly swadhyay with Shri Ramnikbhai Zota and monthly meetings at the HSNC. We also enjoy the yearly Camp Lalit.

We are fortunate to share our Jain knowledge through performing Pratikraman every day during Paryushan and participating during monthly meetings. Indira feels honored to be a part of the Bhakti group. Finally, we are very thankful to every member of **JSCNC** who has welcomed us and become a part of our life. Ohm Shanti.

JSCNC: TRADITIONS, CHANGING WITH TIME, ADOPTING TECHNOLOGY BY MAHESH VARIA

Congratulations to the Jain Study Center of North Carolina (JSCNC) on its 40th Anniversary. JSCNC had an amazing vision when it was founded in 1979. Over the past 40 years so many of us have witnessed its vibrant growth while maintaining traditions, changing with the times, and adopting new technologies.

Maintaining Traditions.

From its inception in 1979, JSCNC has served the community with many of the Jain traditions. Monthly meetings start with recitation of *Namokar Mantra followed by stavans*. It has been heartwarming to see young children and youth present stories and recite *sutras* they have studied. The meeting concludes with *arti* and *sadharmic* lunch.

Throughout the year, we celebrate and observe traditions of Mahavir Jayanti and Paryushan. Basic and deeper understanding of Jainism is accomplished through *Pathshala* for the children and youth, and through weekly swadhyayas, monthly meeting presentations, and visiting scholar discourses for the adults. Questions are welcome and the discussion greatly enhances our understanding.

Changing with Time.

Mahavir Swami's teachings were in Prakrit, a common person's language at the time instead of Sanskrit, the scholar's language. As time progressed and changes occurred in the Jain communities in India, Prakrit teachings got translated into common persons' language of the region such as Hindi, Gujarati, Kanada, Tamil and others.

In this country, some adults and most of the children born in this country now communicate in English and are losing contact with the regional languages of India. Most of us have little or no knowledge of Prakrit or Sanskrit.

Changing with the times, the familiar JSCNC "Folder" used in earlier years by children for studying has been replaced by JAINA *Pathshala* course work with books in English created and published by Pravinbhai Shah. This is a well-organized course for various ages starting at elementary school level through to high school level and in use at many *Pathshalas* throughout North America. This set of books in English is useful for adults too.

A unique practice adopted by JSCNC is the observance of Paryushan in addressing the needs of changing times to allow for maximum participation by the community. Instead of following the traditional dates of Paryushan, JSCNC observes Paryushan from Saturday to Saturday closely corresponding to the traditional dates. Individual members can still observe Paryushan according to the traditional dates.

We now also have English Pratikraman prepared by Pravinbhai Shah. This English Pratikraman has original sutras in Prakrit but with English transliteration and meanings readily understood by both children and adults.

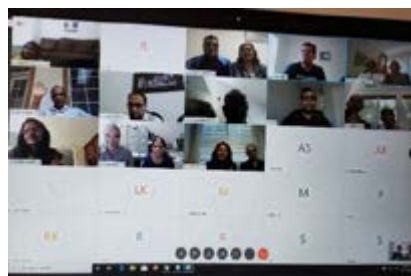
With the growth of **JSCNC**, monthly meetings that used to be rotated at member's homes have changed to a central venue at HSNC. **JSCNC** also observes Mother's Day, Father's Day, other activities and events according to societal and cultural needs.

Adopting Technology. **JSCNC** has been at the forefront of adopting technology to further its mission. Some of these will be mentioned here.

Jain BBS. **JSCNC** was an early pioneer in adopting the technology of the Internet. Jain Education and Information Electronic Bulletin Board System (Jain BBS) was initiated in 1993. One could access Jainism information via the nascent Internet with the use of a home computer and a modem! **JSCNC** started an educational program via e-mail where participants received monthly e-mail on Jainism topics. Initially the website www.jainism.org was housed at UNC-Chapel Hill (by Mahesh Varia), later moved to Pluralism Project at Harvard University, and now the jainelibrary.org

JAIN eLibrary. The Jain eLibrary website (jainelibrary.org) created by **JSCNC** founder member Pravinbhai Shah is a revolutionary project of ready digital access to Jainism information. The eLibrary has ever expanding access to Jainism books, articles, magazines, audio/video files and *Agams*. The eLibrary currently has over 10,000 books in Hindi, Gujarati, English, over 63,000 registered users from 164 countries, and over a million files downloaded with no user fee! Registration is free on the website.

Online Video Meetings. The advent of COVID-19 brought restrictions on in person gatherings. **JSCNC** rapidly adapted to the technology of online video virtual meetings. The first WebEx monthly meeting of **JSCNC** was held on April 19, 2020. This was a great success and has led to subsequent virtual monthly meetings.



April 2020 – First Virtual Meeting

Online Virtual Meeting Platforms. This has been readily adopted for several activities.

- Pravinbhai Shah's weekly Jain Wednesday Workshops (replayed on Mondays) coordinated by Sejal Shah.
- Saturday morning weekly *swadhyayas* conducted under the leadership of Pravinbhai Shah have successfully migrated to an online virtual meeting set up by Amit Pothiwala. This now also includes an online Yoga session by Jyoti Shah.
- Other technological adaptations by Pravinbhai Shah and Sejal Shah include the WhatsApp Jain Workshop USA group and his innovative Jain Blog "Jainism- Know It, Understand It & Internalize It".
- Dr. Ramnik Zota conducts weekly *swadhyaya* on Tuesdays on Zoom coordinated by Sejal Nanavati.

Google Hangout, Google Meet. The **JSCNC** Executive Committee now has virtual meetings online.

Our Jain Study Center has demonstrated exceptional success in maintaining traditions, changing with the times, and adopting technological innovations.

MY JOURNEY: UNDERSTANDING JAINISM FROM KAMPALA TO CAROLINA BY MAHESH VARIA

My journey began in Kampala, Uganda. My parents had emigrated from Jamnagar to Kampala, Uganda in East Africa where I was born. My mother was a devout Jain and I grew up in Jain traditions. I attended Jain Pathshala in Kampala where my father was President of the Jain “*Sangh*” for many years.

However, it was not till we were in North Carolina, and became part of the founding of the Jain Study Center (JSCNC) in 1979, that our deeper understanding of Jainism started. We owe it to the philosophy of JSCNC; that it is not only a community but also a *study* center for Jainism. JSCNC afforded rich opportunities to enhance our understanding of Jainism through the weekly “*swadhyays*”, monthly meetings, and periodic visits of Jain scholars who gave illuminating discourses.

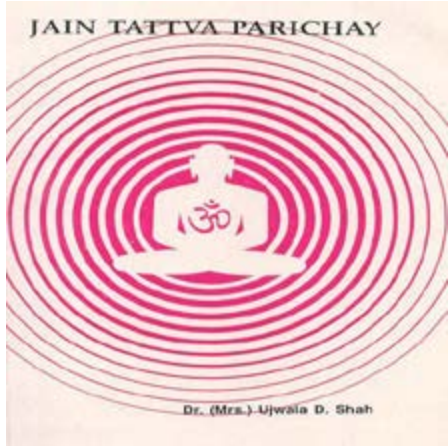
Pravin Shah provided many of the monthly meeting discourses then as he does now. The weekly evening “*swadhyays*” at his home before on Carriage Woods Drive in Cary, delved deeper into Jain philosophy. That was the beginning of learning about the Jain “*shastras*” (scriptures) for us. I recall that after a busy day at work, taking care of our young children, and having dinner, we would rush from Chapel Hill to Cary, and this was before I-40 was fully constructed! In those days Cary seemed far away, but we listened to, discussed, and got introduced to the major scriptures of Jainism: “*Samaysaar, Atma Siddhi, Moksh marg Prakashak,*” and other topics.

Discourses by visiting scholars Dhirajlal Panditji, Dr. Bharrill, and others were immensely valuable in furthering the basic concepts of Jainism. In that regard, Panditji’s Gujarati book “*Jain Dharmna Maulik Siddhanto*” (Fundamental Principles of Jainism) is an amazing introduction to the basics of Jainism. I want to make a few observations about this wonderful book.

“*Jain Dharmna Maulik Siddhanto*” starts with a detailed meaning of the Namokar Mantra. It becomes clear why this is a universal prayer amongst Jains of all sects. The book notes the attributes of the “*panch-paramsehthi*” (five venerable beings). It is not a prayer to anyone particular divine god but obeisance and reverence for the five venerable beings and whose attributes we should emulate.



The book goes on to explain other sutras and has a wonderful introduction to “*Nav Tattva*” from “*Tattvarth Sutra*” another universally respected “*shastra*” among Jains. Panditji’s book encompasses the topics of “*14 Gunasthanaks, Karma, and Anekantvaad.*” These fundamental concepts of Jainism are explained in a simple way for Gujarati readers.



However, it was at the JAINA convention in the 1990s that I came across Dr. Ujjwalaben Shah's book "*Jain Tattva Parichay*" in English that opened up the understanding of the fundamental concepts for me. And by coincidence, Dr. Ujjwalaben Shah and her husband Dineshbhai Shah were invited by Chetanaben and Rameshbhai Fofaria for a full seven days "*shibir*" at their house from 9 am to 9 pm with intervals. Both Indu and I jumped at this opportunity and took time off work, along with several others to attend this "*shibir*" full time.

During this "*shibir*" we learned the basics of "*Dravya, Guna and Paryaya*" and their application to other concepts in Jainism. For me, this was the most important learning experience. Over the years since then, **JSCNC** has provided experiences in traditions and learning of "*tattvas*" in an atmosphere of a caring community and social activities.

In this personal journey, **JSCNC** has provided wonderful opportunities to present Jain concepts at monthly meetings. These opportunities have been extraordinarily valuable learning experiences, while preparing for these presentations. Active participation in the weekly Jain swadhyays at HSNC and studying the book "*Jain Siddhant Prasahnotarmala*" have all contributed to further our understanding of Jainism.

For me, this has been the uniqueness and the essence of the Jain Study Center of North Carolina: a journey of deepening the understanding of Jainism, participation in traditional activities, and enjoying the friendship of this amazing and supportive community.

ધર્મ સંસ્કાર

લી. મનીષ મહેતા

જય જિનેન્દ્ર

JSCNC એ ૪૦ વર્ષ સુધી આપણા સેન્ટરને માધ્મ બનાવી આપણને જૈન ધર્મનો માર્ગ અને એની સમજણ, જાણકારી સરળ ભાષામાં અને ભાવિ પેઢી માટે સરળ માર્ગ કરી આપ્યો છે.

તેના ૪૦ વર્ષો પુરા કર્યા તે માટે નો નમ્ર પ્રયાસ અને ઘગસ પ્રશંસાપાત્ર છે. આ સિદ્ધિ માટે સર્વેને અભિનંદન.

મારો સેન્ટર સાથે ૩૫ વર્ષનો સંબંધ છે. મને ધર્મ સમજવા / આચરવા તથા સાથે વિચારોની આપ - લે અને સંપીને રહેવાના ઘણા લાભ મળ્યા છે.

JSCNC દર મહિને શુરુઆતમાં જુદા જુદા ઘરે અને ત્યારબાદ HSNC ના હોલમાં આપણો નિત્યક્રમ જાળવી રાખ્યો. સૌના સાથથી ઘણીજ પ્રગતિ કરી.

JSCNC નો ધ્યેય જૈન ધર્મની સમજણ સર્વેને સરળ ભાષામાં સમજાવી. આ માટે સ્કોલરને આપણે ત્યાં બોલાવ્યા, જૈન પાઠશાળા ભણાવી અને વિવિધ લોકલ જાણકારો સાથે વાર્તાલાપ કર્યો.

દર વર્ષે પર્યુષણ પર્વ તથા સંવત્સરી સમૂહ પ્રતિક્રમણ તથા વિવિધ જૈન તહેવારોની ઉજવણી કરી. અને ભાવિ પેઢીને ક્રિયા કરવા માટે પ્રેરિત કર્યા.

આ ભગીરથ કાર્યની સફળતા માટે સેન્ટરના સભ્યો એ મહેનત કરી અને આપણને પ્રગતિનો ફળો પામ્યા તે માટે એ માટે સૌને અભિનંદન.

JSCNC આ રીતે વધારે સિદ્ધી પ્રાપ્ત કરે એજ પ્રાર્થના.

A SANGH CALLED HOME

BY MANSI SHAH

JSCNC is home, the village that raised me, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have grown up in such a warm, welcoming community as a first generation Indian-American and Jain. Going to Jain meetings, regularly attending Pathshaala, and meeting other Jain youth who shared the same hyphenated American identity as I did really allow me to grow into my identity as a Jain and as a person. This was a place that I could be totally myself and felt comfortable asking questions about what it meant to bring the Jain principles and ideas we learned about into the 21st century.

One of the ideas that stuck with me is the respect we as Jains give to all forms of life, regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant. This idea of seeing all forms of life as equally important really helped foster a deep curiosity about the natural world, and allowed me to consider what I could do to limit the footprint and resulting negative impact my life had on the planet. This led me to pursue a degree in Environmental Science, go vegan, and is still the driving force behind the data-driven analytics work I do today, always with the interests and ethics of the environment and other beings in mind.

Although I have since moved away from the NC Triangle Area and am physically distant from my **JSCNC** home and family, I will always remember and return to the people I met and lessons I learned growing up that taught me how to be a good Jain and a responsible, compassionate citizen of the world.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS....

BY MAYUR AND RITA LODAYA

Reminiscing on our journey as **JSCNC** members since coming to North Carolina in the summer of 2007, one word to describe it is “awesome”.

No matter which way we look at it:

- Whether it be learning about the basics of Jain religion
- What our kids have learned, achieved or contributed along the way or
- The society that we proudly call our own

We were truly fortunate, given the choices we had at the time, that we decided to come here. In this relatively small but vibrant community of ours, above all, we are blessed to have multiple senior members who not only have been successful in their profession, but who have also found the time and passion to learn about the basics of Jain religion. More importantly, they have shared these learnings with the rest of us through our monthly meetings and regular swadhyaya sessions. Among them, we feel incredibly lucky to have Pravinbhai as our guru. Prior to coming here, it is not a surprise that we were given his name as the person to connect with, to become part of **JSCNC**. Through him, we connected with Badalbhai and Heenaben as we found a place to live in Chapel Hill and since then, we are part of that small group “from Chapel Hill”, along with Drs. Mahesh and Indu Varia. As we think about the learnings from Pravinbhai as it relates to Jain religion, two key things that come to mind are

- Do what will reduce your Kashayas (Anger, Greed, Ego, Deceit)
- You are the judge, and you are the jury

If one takes these things to heart, the journey to become a truly good citizen becomes a lot simpler and easy to navigate.

When we think about both our kids, Hetali and Kunal, the only thing we can say is we feel extremely lucky to have come here. Both have learned a lot, succeeded in their academic endeavors and are ready to contribute to the greater society. This is a banner year for us as a family: Hetali just completed her graduate studies in law and education, while Kunal will start his graduate program in chemistry this fall.

While we celebrate Mahavir Jayanti, Paryushan, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day and participate in highway clean-up twice a year as a community, the annual Jain Camp (now “Camp Lalit”) has been a real treat, over the years. Above all, the natural settings of Umstead Park, the company of our friends (they are now our extended family), having scholars over a weekend to learn from and, finally, great food, makes it an occasion that everyone in the community looks forward to. The sudden passing of Lalitbhai Banker in early 2008 was a great loss for us as a community, during our first year as **JSCNC** members. If we really felt his loss as relative newcomers to the community, we can only imagine how the rest of the community must have felt. Kamleshbhai has taken on the mantle since then and has provided great leadership for all things related to Camp Lalit.

On the following page, we have also written short notes about two **JSCNC** projects that we are most involved with: Veerayatan and Pathshala for Mayur and Rita, respectively. In summary, coming to **JSCNC**, we have found it all. We feel truly blessed and proud to call **JSCNC** as our community!

Pathshala:

Being part of the **JSCNC** pathshala since 2007 has been a blessing. Starting off with assisting Purvi Shah for the first two years, I continued as a teacher for the older group (eventually named the Mahavir group). My journey has continued over the years, in roles as a Youth Coordinator, Mahavir Jayanti Cultural Program Coordinator, and Pathshala Director, but the role I truly treasure is my interaction with each and every student that I have had the privilege to teach. In many ways, I have learnt a lot from them too! Seeing their faces



light up when they learn a new concept of Jain philosophy, their eagerness to ask and answer questions, their enthusiasm to participate in classroom trivia games – these are only some of the many experiences that I have cherished and will forever hold dear to my heart.

Being involved with the pathshala has also allowed me to be a member of the Executive Committee for a number of years, and has given me the opportunity to work alongside some very smart and dedicated individuals of our community (too many to name here but you know who you are 😊). Along with my pathshala

kids, I am forever indebted to my fellow pathshala teachers (Sejal Shah, Shweta Shah, Neha Mehta, and Purvi Shah) for being a great team, and supporting me in this fulfilling endeavor of teaching the Jain Way of Life to the kids in our community.

Veerayatan:

In January 2016, during an India trip, we went to Sammet Shikharji and then to Rajgir. While we had attended a few sessions by Acharya Shri Chandanaji and other Sadhvijis from Veerayatan, this was our real introduction to Veerayatan. We were able to observe the three foundational pillars of “Seva, Shiksha and Sadhana” in action. That’s when we decided to



take an active role in the Palitana school (Mahavir Vidya Mandir) project. **JSCNC** has been and continues to be a proud supporter of Veerayatan and the causes that it serves, with Madhukerbhai leading the charge.

Over the last two years, I am actively supporting Madhukerbhai with the Palitana school project. The school currently serves about 200 pupils in grades 1-7, with most of them being sons and daughters of doliwalas and other peasants living in Palitana. We sponsored educational expenses for 34 students last year, as a community. Over the coming years, we hope to keep increasing that number.

RAISED BY A VILLAGE
BY MIHIR SHAH

Jai Jinendra,

Growing up as a young Jain in America was not easy. Attempting to explain aspects of Jainism to other children was a difficult task, often met with confusion. Vegetarianism, non-violence, multiplicity of views, and non-possessiveness were all core beliefs that people around us didn't always share, and the pressure to uphold our values was high.

But I never felt alone, thanks to the **JSCNC** community. From an early age, we would have discussions about how to talk to our friends and classmates about Jainism, and how to live a Jain way of life in a country that may have trouble understanding us. The wonderful Paathshaala teachers we had as kids devoted their time and energy into providing robust opportunities to learn about social impact and giving back. From highway cleanups to food bank visits to cooking for homeless shelters, the experiences we were given taught me the importance of investing in your community and leading through service.

As a recent college graduate reflecting on my experiences with public speaking and improv comedy, I can trace my passion for performing back to hosting Mahavir Jayanti years ago. This society allowed me to pursue my passion for storytelling and instilled in me the confidence to make my voice heard at a young age. I now understand the importance of being able to share one's story and communicate with vulnerability – skills I was first introduced to during our annual youth program. This empowerment was incredibly valuable, and something I do not take for granted.

Most importantly, this community is where I met the most important people in my life. It was through **JSCNC** that I met my best friends, my college housemate, my role models, my mentors, and my support system. Thank you to the founders of **JSCNC** for providing a safe space for my parents when they first arrived in North Carolina in 1990 – your love and inclusivity has reverberated across a generation, and I hope to be able to give back to my community as generously as you have created one.

BALANCED LIFE BY MINAL SHAH

As I was born and raised in a traditional Jain family that focused on rituals, I was often left without understanding “Why”?

I believe traditions are the foundation for one to follow rituals and dig deeper into Why? The Jain Study Center of North Carolina has provided me with the opportunity to answer some of those questions better through an increased understanding of myself and my religion.

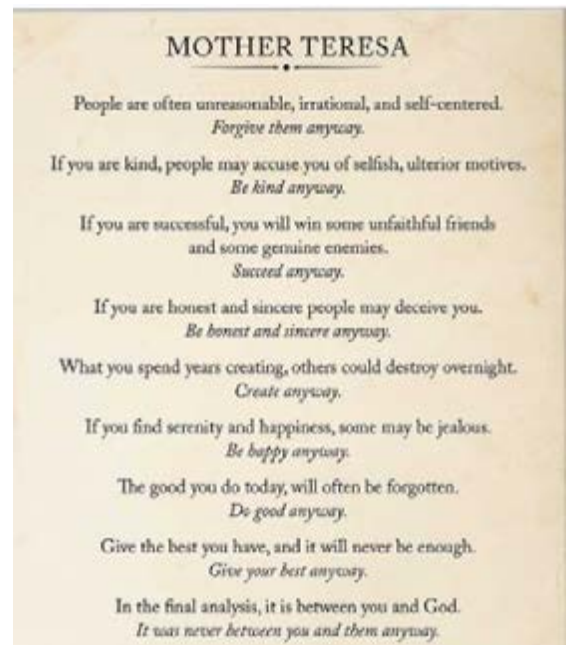
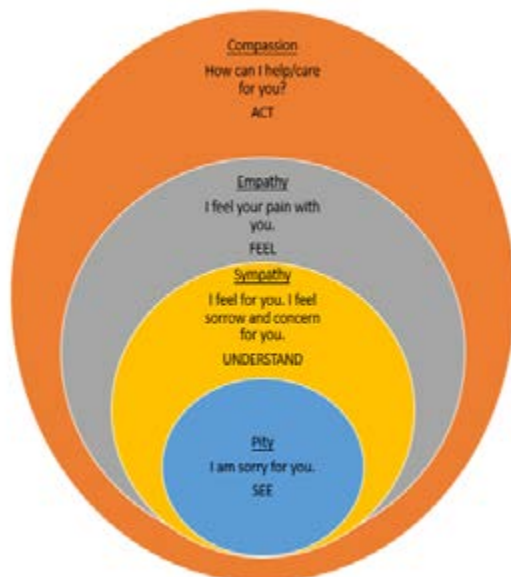
I am very thankful to Pravin Uncle, Aarti Aunty, Mahesh Uncle, Indu Aunty, Kirit bhai, Jyoti ben, Zota Uncle, and many more members of our Jain family.

JSCNC family has been very instrumental in forming who I am as an individual. It has opened my mind to think, analyze and apply Jain principles in my daily life in different roles: daughter, parent, wife, sister, student, teacher, friend, in-law, and professional.

As I understood from my learnings: to have a balanced life, an individual should have balance between body, heart, mind, and spirit. Jainism has played a vast role in achieving this balance in my life.

I would like to share a high-level summary of my learning from **JSCNC**:

- Watch your thoughts
- Follow the 3 A's
 - Ahimsa (Non-violence)
 - Anekantvada (Multiple view)
 - Aparigraha (Non-possession)



BEGINNING OF SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

BY MIRA AND PRITESH SHAH

We moved 20+ years ago to Raleigh from New Jersey. The Jain Community then was so small that our monthly meetings used to be at someone's house. We have very fond memories of Jain meetings, Mahavir Jayanti celebrations, Father's Day Picnic, Mother's day celebration, Paryushan Puja and Pratikraman (both English and traditional), cultural programs, camp "Lalit", scholars' lectures, highway clean up and above all having wonderful families around us. We never missed any **JSCNC** events if we were in town. We have grown with the community both personally and spiritually.

We have developed strong bonds with the community members, and we call this community our second family. We are very fortunate to have great scholars in our community and because of them we have extraordinary visiting scholars coming to us. When we moved, we didn't have any knowledge about Jainism. Over the years, being around the scholars like Pravinbhai, Dr. Zota, Dr. Varia and other knowledgeable people in our community, we have evolved and feel that we have definitely made some spiritual progress. Our daughters, Sheel and Salauni have bonded with the kids of their age as well as seniors through pathshala and all the **JSCNC** community events. Sheel and Salauni were exposed to YJA through older kids in the community. They not only bonded with the local YJA kids but also kids across North America and they have developed lifelong friendships.

INFLUENCE OF JSCNC IN MY LIFE BY MITUL MEHTA

Jai Jinendra,

My name is Mitul Mehta and I am the son of Pratyush (Badal) and Heena Mehta.

JSCNC has been a part of my life from the day I was born. Friends my parents made within the group were some of the first people to see me in the hospital after my birth. In my early years, I remember visiting other families' homes once a month and sitting with my father as we all sang stavans. I quickly learned them by heart as I was rewarded with a \$1 bill every time I sang in front of the whole group. Out of all of the great memories I have about **JSCNC**, there are two that resonate with me the most, and they are the annual Mahavir Jayanti celebration and the Adopt A Highway activities.

Mahavir Jayanti was one of my favorite celebrations of the year. I remember being amazed by how many people would partake in the morning pooja. After that, the youth would present a skit for hundreds of people. Being one of the oldest kids, I normally had a large part in the skits. We even did one skit entirely in Gujarati!

The Adopt A Highway program was one of my favorite activities to do. I remember splitting up into groups and cleaning up various roads around the Mandir/Temple. We were rewarded with doughnuts and juice after we were done. It gave me so much pride to help out the community with my fellow Jain's.

I am very thankful for the memories and experiences **JSCNC** has given me and wish everyone a happy 40th anniversary!

JSCNC - THROUGH THE YEARS

BY MONISH SHAH

My earliest memory of **JSCNC** is probably the Pathshala class we used to hold in a small room there. I went to Pathshala on the first and the third Sunday, and the monthly meetings every third Sunday, and to this day, I still continue to do so. Through Pathshala and all the monthly meetings, I was taught about Jainism, Tirthankars, and Jain principles. I learned sutras and recited them at the monthly meetings. As I grew older, I attended: highway cleanups, the crop walk, and helped at the food bank. During the highway cleanup, I saw how much trash actually gets left on the side of the roads, and I got to help clean some of it up. The whole experience taught me about community service and how to be a good citizen. At the food bank, I helped sort sweet potatoes, cans, and other boxes of food. This experience had a big impact on me and taught me that I should always be thankful for the food, and luxuries that I have. The Jain camp is my favorite outdoor event because it is a weekend in which we can have fun, do a lot of different activities, and also learn from various sadhus and sadhvis. Through **JSCNC**, I have made so many friends and lifelong memories.

I look forward to continuing learning as I grow up and hope to pay it forward someday.

NEWBIE TO A CONTRIBUTING JSCNC MEMBER BY NEHA & KETAN KURUWA

Neha and I moved to Raleigh, NC from San Antonio 'TX. It was September of 2012 and the first thing that struck us was the greenery all around us. It was a lot greener than South Texas and very pretty. We were staying in a hotel when we first moved to the area. One night, we were woken up by loud police cries asking us to open the door. In my sleep I thought they were asking me to come out. But thankfully Neha pulled me back and told me to go back to sleep. Soon we heard loud warnings and busted doors followed by an ambulance. Some drug dealer had been apprehended next door. It was scary then but in hindsight it made us focus on moving to a safe place soon.

Around the same time, I also found out about **JSCNC**. I called Kamlesh bhai and he asked us to attend the monthly meeting to get introduced to the community. We received a very warm welcome from many community members after the introduction. We attended limited meetings in the beginning as our kids were very young and could not sit still through the discourse. Now they go to the pathshala but still create a ruckus at times after lunch.

I feel fortunate to be a part of this community, which is large enough to support the pathshala, monthly meetings and Mahavir Jayanti but yet small enough that we know most of the members by first name. In addition to fulfilling the spiritual needs of the community we also have social events like Father's Day picnic which allows the community to mingle in a relaxed outdoor setting.

As I have become a more active member of the community and gotten engaged with youth activities, I have had the privilege of learning from the youth of the community as we engage them in various activities. I have learnt about the unique career and education paths pursued by our youth during the session on college admissions. I have also become aware of the social media platforms as we establish **JSCNC** presence on leading social media sites.

Neha has been working with the community for the past three years as the Mahavir Jayanti cultural program coordinator. When she raised her hand to be the cultural coordinator for Mahavir Jayanti there were a lot of questions in her mind. However, those questions were soon put to rest by the experienced members of the community who helped her with learning the ropes to have a great cultural program.

She has had the privilege of interacting with almost all the parents of young kids during her tenure as a cultural coordinator and has learnt a great deal about the community and made new friendships during this time. She has also learnt a lot from our young choreographers about leadership and working on teams to have a successful program.

This engagement with **JSCNC** and with the youth of the community has made us more humble as we learn from everyone's unique gifts and talents.

GROUND ZERO BY NISHA PADIA

Simple proverbial saying "People who pray together, stay together", how true it was, as strangers to this country needed to socialize with each other for common good. To find a common bond was not a challenge and we soon realized that the Faith was our solution. There were only 20 JAIN families in the area when the Jain Study Group was formed; met every Third Sunday of the month wearing their hospitality hats, welcoming founding members in the Host Family's Home.

Host family's residence was transformed to a place of rituals, worship, chanting, socializing and of course potluck lunches. Collective collaboration was a key for monthly schedules and food tables. Time never seemed to stop. From 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. everybody enjoyed chanting, Kids talks, religious sessions, and adult sessions with questions and answers.

An annual weekend Camp, and Mahavir Jayanti had its own charm. When my 4 years daughter was asked what do you do on a Sunday? Her response was to get up early, wear nice clothes, go to my friends' house to meet each other and socialize a bit before we all sit down for religious activities. We kids had to prepare a small speech and recite before all our uncles & aunties. It was so much fun! What beautiful memories that were soul satisfying bringing a ray of hope like a rainbow in the sky.

Ground day ZERO was born. Community members' ambitions, and dedication saw combined efforts in today's existing environment. Yes, our very own JAIN DERASAR under the umbrella of HINDU TEMPLE - Hindu Society of North Carolina. It stands tall withstanding tests of all times and traditions. What an achievement with all faiths under the same roof. Our posterity will embark on its unique message. All Indian faiths are equal. Religious events, traditions and beliefs are an ongoing celebration of Peace and tranquility which is offered on a daily basis. Society members dedicate and volunteer their time for maintaining the temple for doing daily puja and offerings. A great partnership bond is created among community members since its origin, which has never stopped growing. With great hope and pride I have attempted to describe how from "MY DERASAR", it has become "OUR TEMPLE" where all faiths are worshipped.

JAI - JINENDRA.

THE JAIN GROUP

BY NISHA VARIA

The Jain group holds a special place in my heart for the formative role it played in shaping my values and way of life, and for the strong sense of community and support it provides my parents.

Jainism is ancient, but timeless. In my career as a human rights activist, I have seen that in today's complex world with its daunting challenges, there is so much that Jainism has to offer. This includes situations of conflict-prevention and resolution, respecting and taking care of the environment, generating harmony among diverse peoples and countries, and offering a lifestyle of non-accumulation that counters the harms and inequalities caused by unchecked capitalism.

The Jain group has been influential in my family's life, not only for the spiritual and moral guidance, but also for the deep social and cultural bonds. After four decades, the Jain group is not a "study center" but, truly, family. Even having lived outside of NC for twenty years, coming back to a Jain meeting feels like coming home.

Congratulations to the Jain Study Center of North Carolina for completing 40 years!

I look forward to keeping this group as a model and inspiration for the next 40 as well.

JSCNC - A COMMUNITY THAT MAKES YOU FEEL AT HOME

BY PARESH & RUPANDE GONDALIA

Nirupa and I moved to the Triangle area back in August of 2013 with the intention of retirement. We stayed in an apartment for a few months while we were looking for a house of our choice. We were in the process of downsizing and were looking for a small-town house. This was a new area for us and did not know many people. My first contact was with Madhukerbhai Mehta. He was the first person who told me about the Jain Center in this area. We were advised to purchase a house in the Morrisville area and closer to Hindu Temple. We did buy a house of our choice in November of 2013. We are just about 1,5 miles from the Hindu Temple.

We have been very closely associated with **JSCNC** since our move to NC. We take a very active part in all activities of **JSCNC**. We normally travel to India every winter for about 4 months but when we are in this area we attend all activities of **JSCNC**. We are fortunate to have scholars like Pravinbhai Shah, Maheshbhai Varia and Ramnikbhai Zota. We consider ourselves very lucky to be part of this very active and lively group. We made many friends in a very short time and that's because of very friendly members of **JSCNC**. They welcomed us with open arms and accepted us like part of the family in a very short time. Our transition became much easier when **JSCNC** members stood with us.

I was Jain by my birth but by my karma I was far from that. I became aware of Jainism by my association of many learned members and attending all lectures by various visiting scholars. Now I am a regular member of Tuesday Swadhaya group which is led by R Zota. My life has changed forever by gaining a true knowledge of Jainism by attending all these various activities conducted by **JSCNC**. Nirupa and I sincerely thank one and all members of this group for everything they have done for us. Now we are one of them and not outsiders.

REFLECTIONS AND RECIPES BY PRAGNA AND RAMESH SHAH

Jai Jinendra and Pranam

Has it been 40 years since the inception of **JSCNC**? We can't believe it.

We, Ramesh and Pragna Shah, have been North Carolinians from day one, when we moved from Toronto, Canada to Winston-Salem, NC in 1975. Our association with **JSCNC** goes back a long way. We attended some monthly Swadhyays, at that time they were met at people's homes. We always felt part of the group. We attended the very 1st Jain Camp in 1983 led by Acharya Shree Sushil Muniji and Shantidoot Shree Amrender Muniji. That's where we, including our children, learnt Jain principles, the mediation and yoga.

Fast forward to 2016.

We moved to Durham, NC in April, 2016. As many families are moving closer to their children and of course to their grandchildren, we are no exception. When we attended the Mahavir Jayanti Program in 2016, we met with so many familiar faces and families, we immediately felt reconnected. We received a very warm WELCOME BACK response. Today **JSCNC** has become our extended family. We have made new Swadhyai friends, and learning from our monthly meetings, thus our knowledge of Jainism has expanded, and our association has become stronger.

This past Holiday Season, Ramesh's teenage grandniece, (Haley Saumil Shah from Chicago) asked me to share some sweets/desserts vegetarian recipes. She had tried brownies with avocados, and really liked them.

The culinary world has evolved so much in the past couple of decades, and with access to the Internet, it is not difficult to find all sorts of recipes to one's likings.

Here I take the opportunity to share some of my favorites. They all are vegetarian, can be changed to vegan or some are just vegan.

Please feel free to send me an e-mail or text me if you have any questions or need clarification.

With love and affection:

Pragna and Ramesh Shah

e-mail: dadipragna214@gmail.com

cell: 336 926 2369

Abbreviation: tsp.=teaspoon tbsp.=tablespoon a. p. flour=All Purpose Flour

War Time Cake-Vegan

This cake originated during WWI when the government asked the public not to use certain ingredients on specific days in order to save food for the soldiers overseas. It also was used during the Depression Era and WWII. It was referred to as “eggless, milk less, butter less cake.” Wow, A vegan cake back then!

Ingredients:

Part 1

2 cups hot water
2 cups brown sugar
2 tsp. shortening
½ to ¾ cup raisins
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. clove powder (can be done at home)

Part 2

3 cups a. p. flour
1 tsp. baking soda dissolved in a couple of tsps. of hot water

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350-degree F.

Mix all ingredients in part 1 together in a medium to large pot. And place it on a stove. Cook the mixture until it begins to bubble, then boil for 5 minutes. Next, let it cool completely and when the mixture is cool, add part 2 ingredients, mix well and put the mixture into a greased tube pan. Bake for about 1 hour.

Brownies with Avocado or Tofu-Vegan

Ingredients:

¼ cup pureed or well mashed avocado or tofu well blended
¼ cup vegetable oil
1 cup a. p. flour
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
¾ cup sugar
1 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt

¾ cup water or ½ cup brewed coffee + ¼ cup water
1 ½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350-degree F.

Grease 8"x8" square pan with cooking spray

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the pureed avocado or tofu and oil until smooth. Add flour, cocoa powder, sugar, baking soda, salt and water or coffee+water. Stir until smooth. Fold in 1 cup of the chocolate chips

Pour into the prepared pan and spread batter evenly throughout the pan. sprinkle additional ½ cup of chocolate chips on top. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until the center comes out mostly clean. (there may be some melted chocolate chips in there). If you over bake it, brownies will have a cake like texture.

Remove from the oven and let the brownies cool completely. Cut them into pieces using **plastic knife**

Makes 16 squares

Brownies from Brownie Box Mix

Ingredients:

1 pkg Betty Crocker double fudge brownie mix
1/3 cup cold water
4 tbsp. vegetable oil or butter
1 tsp. flax seed meal (ground flax seed)
¼ cup water
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
½ cup chopped walnuts

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350-degree F.

Empty brownie mix into a bowl. Add 1/3 cup cold water and 4 tbsp. oil. In a small cup add flaxseed meal and slowly add ¼ cup water and whisk it with a fork. Let the mixture sit for 5 minutes. Add to the brownie mix. Add vanilla. Stir everything until well blended. Add nuts and combine once again.

Generously grease 8x8" pan. Spread mixture evenly in the pan. Bake it anywhere between 30-35 minutes, checking the doneness.

Toothpick test doesn't work with these brownies. Instead the touch test is more reliable. When you touch the top, it should not leave indentation. If it does, the batter is still soft so you need to bake it for another couple of minutes.

Cool it completely. Cut it with a **plastic knife**. Makes 16 squares.

Apple-Raisins Muffins-Vegan

Ingredients:

¼ cup water
½ cup sugar
½ cup grated apples (skin and core removed, Granny Smith are better)
¼ cup raisins
¼ cup vegetable oil
½ tsp. cinnamon powder
½ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
1/4 tsp. clove powder (can be done at home)
¼ cup chopped walnuts
½ tsp. baking soda
Little over ¾ cup a. p. flour

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350-degree F.

Combine water, sugar, apples, raisins, oil, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves in a saucepan. Bring to a boil. Remove from the stove and cool completely.

In a large bowl, mix, flour, nuts and baking soda. Add cooled mixture to bowl and stir until well blended. Grease muffins tins. Pour batter almost to the top. Bake for 20 minutes. Makes about 10 muffins.

Pumpkin Muffins

Ingredients:

1 box Trader Joe's pumpkin muffin mix
1 tbsp. cornstarch mixed with 1 to 1 ½ tbsp. almond milk or water
½ cup walnuts
½ cup cranberries (optional)

Directions:

Mix it according to the direction on the box. Add cornstarch mixture and walnuts. Bake it according to the direction on the box.

Healthy Energy Balls-Vegan- No baking

Ingredients:

1 cup dry oatmeal slightly ground (not powdery)
2/3 cup lightly toasted coconut flakes (unsweetened)
½ cup your choice of peanut butter or almond butter (I prefer crunchy)
½ cup ground flaxseed meal (ground flax seed)
¼ cup chia seeds
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/3 to ½ cup maple syrup (more if you like sweeter)

Directions:

Mix all ingredients until thoroughly combined. If mixture little too dry, add little peanut/almond butter
Refrigerate the dough for at least 30 minutes
Use chilled dough to make tablespoon sized balls
Place on a cookie sheet
Then refrigerate for an additional 30 minutes.

Store them in airtight container and keep them in the refrigerator

Ginger Man Cookies-can be Vegan

These cookies are fun for the kids, to cut them in different shapes and then decorate them. Mom has a hard part, rolling them.

Ingredients:

½ cup molasses
½ cup Crisco (can use butter of equal parts)
¼ cup brown sugar (firmly packed)
1 ¼ cup a. p. flour
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. each, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, nutmeg, and all spice

Easy Creamy Icing (Below)

Directions:

On a medium heat, melt Crisco or butter. Add molasses and brown sugar. Add remaining ingredients except icing. Cover and chill dough for 2-3 hours in the fridge

Take the dough out and let it sit for an hour to soften.

Roll dough ¼” thick or if desired paper thin on a lightly floured cloth covered board. Cut into desired shapes. Place ½” apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 8 minutes for ¼ “cookies and 6 minutes for paper thin cookies. Constantly watch the cookies, since they bake very fast, otherwise you will end with burnt cookies

Makes appx. 36 ¼ “cookies and appx 60 cookies if rolled paper thin.

Frost with easy icing:

Mix 1 cup confectioner sugar, ½ tsp. vanilla extract and 1 ½ tbsp. cream or milk. Mix until very smooth and have spreading consistency. Tint with different food colors if desired and decorate.

Pecan Petites- can be Vegan

Ingredients:

1/3 cup sugar
2 cups a. p. flour
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts
2 sticks regular margarine or butter

¾ cup confectioner sugar (sifted to get any lumps out)

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 325-degree F.

Cream margarine and sugar together. Add vanilla extract. Mixing well. Add flour and walnuts/pecans. Shape into balls using a rounded teaspoon. Place the balls on an ungreased cookie sheet. Flatten the ball slightly with your fingers. Bake for 20 minutes. Cool for 2-3 minutes until able to handle the hot cookies. Roll each ball in confectioner sugar. Makes appx. 35-40 cookies. Store in an airtight container.

Tip:

Can be shaped like crescent

Variation:

Use chopped cashews or mixture of cashews and pistachios, instead of walnuts or pecans
Add 1 tsp. cardamom powder. This gives Indian mithai taste

Zucchini Nut Bread:

Ingredients:

3 cups a. p. flour
3 cups grated zucchini not peeled
1 cup vegetable oil
2 cups sugar
1 cups chopped nuts (walnuts, raisins etc.)
½ cup sour cream
1 tsp. cinnamon powder
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract.

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350-degree F.

Mix well all ingredients.

Grease 2 8 “or 9” round cake pans.

Divide mixture evenly

Bake it for 30 to 35 minutes or until the toothpick comes out clean.

Once cooled, cut them in wedges. Serve with slightly sweetened vanilla Greek yogurt

Blueberry Coffee Cake

Ingredients:

1 cup a. p. flour
½ cup brown sugar
¾ tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. baking soda

¼ cup unsweetened apple sauce
½ cup butter milk
2 tbsp. melted butter
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
¼ tsp. almond extract

1 cup blueberries washed and dried

Topping:

2 tbsp. melted butter
½ cup sliced almonds
1 tbsp. brown sugar
¼ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. nutmeg

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 Degree F.

Grease 8x8" baking pan.

In a small bowl combine melted butter, brown sugar, almonds, cinnamon and nutmeg. Set aside.

In a large bowl, sift flour, sugar, baking powder and baking soda.

In another bowl, combine apple sauce, buttermilk, vanilla and almond extract and butter.

Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients. Combine well.

Fold 2/3 cup of blueberries gently. Pour batter in a prepared pan.

Sprinkle topping mixture evenly.

Use 1/3 cup of remaining blueberries on top.

Tap the pan gently so the sugar mixture and blueberries touch the wet batter.

Bake for 35 minutes or the toothpick comes out clean. Cool slightly before removing from the pan.

Ultimate Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients:

1 ½ sticks unsalted butter melted

1 ¼ cup light brown sugar

3 tbsp. milk, little more if dough is too thick to handle

1 tbsp. pure vanilla extract

¼ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. baking soda

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

1 ¾ cups a. p. flour

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375-degree F.

Mix the first 6 ingredients. Add chocolate chips, nuts and flour

Drop them by 1 tbsp. size on an ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake for appx. 8 minutes

Cool them on a cooling rack for 10 minutes

Makes appx. 35-40 cookies

Tip:

Recipe can be cut in half

Before serving, microwave for 10 seconds to get the freshly baked taste

Chocolate Cake in a Mug in Microwave-Vegan

This recipe is so easy, even a young child (5-6 yrs.) can make it. It is also fun for them. You have a cake in 5 minutes. Voila!!

Ingredients:

3 tbsp. a. p. flour

3 tbsp. sugar

2 tbsp. cocoa powder

¼ tsp. baking powder

Tiny pinch of salt

3 tbsp. whole milk

3 tbsp. vegetable oil

Splash of vanilla extract

3 tbsp. semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions:

Into a 12 oz. microwavable safe, ceramic mug, add flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt

Stir with a fork.

Add milk, vegetable oil, vanilla and stir until smooth. Add chocolate chips.

Use a damp paper towel to wipe off the excess side of the mug.

Microwave on high for 90 seconds. Don't over bake it, it will be dry.

Then let the cake stand for 2-3 minutes before eating.

Serve with sweetened whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. Garnish with 1 sliced strawberry.

Fruit Cobbler

Ingredients

1 stick unsalted butter

¾ cup a. p. flour

¾ cup sugar

1 ¼ tsp. baking powder

¾ cup milk

Pinch of salt

Fruits of your choice

4-5 cups of strawberries –washed and quartered

4-5 cups of peaches, washed, peeled and sliced. Sprinkle some lemon juice to prevent the discoloration.

3-4 cups blueberries

Vanilla ice cream-optional

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350-degree F.

Melt butter in a 2-quart casserole. In a medium size bowl, mix together the next 5 ingredients. Pour on top of the butter. Spoon fruits over this. Do not stir.

Bake for appx. 45 minutes or until fruits are bubbly.

Serve with ice cream while still warm.

INFLUENCE OF JAIN STUDY CENTER OF NORTH CAROLINA BY PRATYUSH MEHTA

Jai Jinendra,

First, I would like to congratulate the Center on its 40th Anniversary. I have been fortunate to be a part of the Jain Study Center of NC since 1987. From attending the monthly Jain meetings, taking active interest in being in the Executive committee, volunteering in annual programs/activities like Mahavir Jayanti Program, Adopt-A-Highway, annual camp, etc., it's been a pure joy to be part of this center. The Jain members of this community are wonderful, patient & understanding and that makes it easy for interaction and exchange of ideas and thoughts. They have given me and my family such a precious memory which we will carry with us and treasure it for the rest of our lives. My spiritual education and experience has definitely expanded with the help of the local scholars and visiting scholars who have been to our Center. This education will always stay with me and my family and help us guide through tougher times in our lives.

In closing I would like to quote a learned scholar who once said:

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about the progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.

A DEBT OF GRATITUDE BY PURVI AND AASHISH MODI

When we moved to the US in the late nineties, after having lived here for a couple of years, we learnt about the Jain Study Center of North Carolina (**JSCNC**) by sheer accident through one of our relatives all the way back in India. We reached out and attended our first monthly meeting in 1999, at the residence of our revered Pravinbhai and Aartiben Shah's former Cary residence. At that time, members took turns and graciously hosted monthly meetings at their homes.

Everyone was very warm and welcoming. It was as if we had known everyone for a long time and we felt like we were part of another extended family. It was quite a unique and memorable experience for us. That feeling of warmth and belongingness continues to this day.

I've looked forward to various annual **JSCNC** events like Mahavir Jayanti, Mother's Day, Father's Day celebrations, Adopt-A-Highway cleanups, Jain Camp and Paryushan. For me, Aashish, the first time, I remember enjoying doing Pratikraman at home where I could make out the words and Sutras being recited, as compared to my experience in India where the fast-paced recitation in a large hall without the use of a microphone would be drowned in several snores around me.

Over the years, with **JSCNC**'s support, we have been fortunate to host several students at our home to do the Sthaanakvasi Pratikraman per the traditional calendar.

The childrens' Pratikraman at our beloved Maheshbhai and Induben Varia's residence every year helped our children greatly when they were younger, especially with the English Pratikraman book published by Pravinbhai. It helped them understand the meaning of our Pratikraman, something which we never benefited from during our childhood. Our Pathshala was another means that helped our children understand the principles and various aspects of Jainism. We are deeply thankful for the selfless hardwork and effort our Pathshala teachers' continuously put in for our children. Kudos to them!

Pathshala has helped our kids live their lives based on Jainism principles and helped them grow to be culturally and emotionally strong Jains. Today, when our children are away from home, we see them applying various Jainism principles in their lives, primarily because they believe them to be important life principles, not just Jainism principles.

We have cherished being a part of this community. Even at a time when Jainism discourses were not available online through YouTube, etc., discourses from visiting scholars helped us learn various aspects of Jainism. We consider ourselves very fortunate and are thankful also to the vast array of scholars within our community - Pravinbhai, Maheshbhai, Ramnikbhai, and more recently Amitbhai, who continue to take the time and effort to share their knowledge about Jainism.

We both are happy and grateful that we chose to make Raleigh our home.

FINDING A HOME BY PURVI SHAH

I moved to the Raleigh, NC area in 2005. I did not know many people here except my husband, Ketan, and was a bit shy first, but the **JSCNC** community welcomed me with open arms and made me feel very comfortable in my new environment. I was very impressed by the cohesiveness of the **JSCNC** community, both within itself as well as its cooperation with the Hindu Society of North Carolina. The uncles and aunties I have met here are people I respect and can look up to. They live the ideals of Jainism, practicing what they preach.

In 2007, I started teaching the pathshala class and the numbers of students continued to grow annually. In order to teach the class, I needed to review and learn myself. I enjoyed learning, teaching, and creating fun activities for the children to play. It gives me a sense of pride when I see the children, I taught all grown up and doing worthwhile things with their lives, either professionally or personally. I left teaching pathshala for several years after having my own children and was asked to start assisting in the pathshala activities again in 2019. Now the **JSCNC** community and the number of children has almost doubled, and it is great volunteering with the other pathshala teachers so we can teach according to the different age groups.

Members of the **JSCNC** community and the different activities (special projects) such as the Adopt-A-Highway program, Food Bank, Camp Lalit, that the community undertakes every year are inspiring. I feel blessed to be a part of the **JSCNC** family and hope that my children will grow up with the same qualities that I admire in the elders of our community.

With deep gratitude,
Purvi Shah

JAINISM AND PSYCHOLOGY

BY RACHNA VARIA

I have been so fortunate to have the Jain Study Center in my life starting at a very young age. From the lectures and children's activities, I learned about the importance of non-violence. This has led to a life where I value the importance of vegetarianism and peaceful protest. My daughter and I recently attended a Black Lives Matter protest that was done in a non-violent manner. The Jain Study Center has taught me how to speak up about my beliefs. I also really value the concept of multiple perspectives. This has helped me in my career as a psychologist. I am always trying to understand the other person's perception. There is not just one truth - but multiple ones. I am thankful for having Jainism inform my decisions.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME BY RAJAN CHHEDA & FAMILY

We first moved to Raleigh, USA in November 2014 after living in Tokyo, Japan for 8 years. While my job brought us to Raleigh from Tokyo, we hadn't heard of this city in NC until we had to make a move. In Tokyo, we had always lived in the community with many other South Asian especially Jain families that made it not miss our home back in India. The move to Raleigh was sudden with so many unknowns. Although we arrived in Raleigh in peak winter, the greenery and the ecstatic beauty of the palm trees astounded us. Soon we felt gratified and were delighted to settle and explore the area and become the part of the Jain community with our leaping hearts.

As we began to settle into our new home in a new country and in search of making new friends within our community, we went to HSNC temple from where we learnt about **JSCNC** center and got Harshad uncle's contact number. Harshad uncle guided us to join the **JSCNC** group via email address and we began going to our monthly meetings.

JSCNC members welcomed us with open arms and huge smiles on their faces. Soon we made many new friends that became our family in no time. Gaining knowledge by attending the month discourse and kids attending the pathshala classes made our belief even stronger about the decision to move to the US was a right one which will make our kids foundation to follow our religious practices.

JCSNC yearly events like Highway cleanup, Mahavir Jayanti celebration, Mother's Day celebration, Father's Day picnic, Camp Lalit, Diwali celebration gave us the platform for volunteering opportunities and built our community bond even stronger.

Kids get opportunities to perform in various community organized programs like Mahavir Jayanti and sing in bhavana during paryushan parv and perform pooja. Father's Day picnic and Camp Lalit gave opportunities for kids and adults alike for some fun and light hearted conversations to be cherished throughout our lives.

From a newbie to **JSCNC** to participating as a volunteer to Food co-ordinator in 2019 and now the Vice-President of **JSCNC** committee, with all the support of the community, I am grateful and truly honored.

REFLECTIONS ON JSCNC BY RAJEN DOSHI

The Beginning

It has been an honor and a blessing to be a part of **JSCNC** and the local Jain community over the years. We are eternally grateful to the two founders - Shri Pravin Shah, and Late Shri Ramesh Fofaria for founding this organization to understand Jainism with proper “knowledge” and with “Study” as a part of the center’s name. This focus has provided pride, purpose, and principles in our members’ lives.

Early Years

The community was small, no internet; communication with India was difficult and expensive, and the local Jain community became “Family” for many of the people, away from home. About 25 families were active in the early '90s, monthly meetings would rotate in members’ homes. These meetings were warm and cozy; people would often hang out till late in the afternoon. Often in the weekend evenings, there would be private dinner programs within the Jain members; people were very close. Starting the year 2000, the boom of the internet, the IT sector, growth of RTP, and promotion in the media of Raleigh/Cary as the best place to live - brought many new families to the area, and the center has grown significantly since.

The Stalwarts

Along with the founders, members like Lalit Banker, Ramnik Zota, Mahesh Varia, Jagdish Shah, Arvind Shah, Vasant Sejpal, etc; provided leadership and a moral compass to the center. I view them as the un-named Trustees of **JSCNC** and they are responsible for its identity, direction, success, and lack of politics.

The Future

After 40 years, I see the legacy of **JSCNC** continue for years to come, due to its strong foundation. While Jainism is a religion, in reality, there are social and cultural aspects to it, and we have to look at all three in harmony. I believe **JSCNC** and the local Jain community are set to promote all of that for the next generations to come. We can instill so much pride and self-esteem into our children about our way of life, a Jain’s way of life as immigrants living in the USA. We have a growing number of young families and an astounding number of children attending pathshala now, which is encouraging.

The Hope

Many years ago, our Pravin Shah, being the visionary he is, made a well-reasoned case to all centers in the USA to celebrate Paryushan on a Saturday to Saturday basis. While **JSCNC** has followed this adjusted calendar, most centers have not embraced the idea. I *hope* in the coming years we make a revived push as this results in school, and work schedules to not be

affected, and allows broader participation in Paryushan's celebration, including Puja and Tapasya by children and parents alike.

Secondly, I *hope* the Jain community continues to grow and serve as a religious, social, and cultural group. **JSCNC** has become a strong community, due to active participation from many families and leaders for the first 20 years, but now it is time to reach out to non-active members and continue this tradition. We must collectively encourage them to do more than just attend Mahavir Jayanti, but rather become as involved as we were. It is a daunting task, but we need to make an effort to integrate them into regular **JSCNC** activities. Only by doing this, can we guarantee the continued strength, unity, and growth of **JSCNC** over the next decade.

The Conclusion

Heartiest congratulations to **JSCNC** on 40 great years. I do believe something in our past lives, past communes have brought us all here together for a reason. And I hope we all cherish each other's presence under the **JSCNC** umbrella and pass the legacy of Mahavir's message on to the next generation.

*Thank you to Arti Shah, Chetna Fofaria, Rekha Banker, Lata Zota, Puja Doshi, Nalini Shah, Indu Varia, Aruna Shah, and Prabha Sejpal for their dedication to **JSCNC***

OUR SHORT MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE AT JSCNC BY RAJENDRA MEHTA

My name is Rajendra Mehta and my wife's name is Kumud Mehta. Currently, we are in Atlanta, GA. We have been life members of Jain Study Center of North Carolina since 1984.

We were in Raleigh, NC for a brief period of two years from 1984 to 1986. We moved to Raleigh from a small town, Cape Canaveral, FL in June 1984. Before moving to Raleigh, the only Jain family we knew was Pravinbhai Shah and Arti Shah as Arti is my distant cousin.

We attended our first Jain meeting at the residence of late Rameshbhai and Chetna Fofaria. I have been in the USA since last 57 year and we never had an opportunity to take part in any Jain community before coming to Raleigh, as we were in small places before coming to Raleigh. At that time, our children Satyen was 12 years and Tejas was 7 years old. During the meetings in Raleigh, we learned so much about Jainism. We were very much impressed by the children's pathshala and the book which was used for learning by children. That book was probably the first of its kind prepared by Pravinbhai and Rameshbhai for children. We met many Jain families and were very pleased. During the two years we were with Jain Study Center of North Carolina, all four of us learned a lot about Jainism. Members were very friendly, and they accepted us right away. I worked with Rameshbhai a lot for activities for the center. The activities conducted by the center were superb.

Since then, I have been a member of Jaina Education committee and work very closely with Pravinbhai.

Unfortunately, we had to move out of Raleigh in 1986 to Orlando. As I was so impressed by the children's pathshala book, after moving to Orlando, I used the same book for Orlando Jain group's Pathshala.

Even though we moved out of Raleigh, we attend prayer's and meetings when we visit Raleigh and meet all the members.

JSCNC was our inspiration to learn about Jainism and teach Jainism to our children.

MAITRI BHAAV NU PAVITRA JARNU - JSCNC
BY REKHA BANKER

In 1979, Lalit and I, a young newly married couple, set out for a new adventure, relocating from Illinois to Raleigh, North Carolina. We did not know anyone, but we were glad we found the local Indian community. We wanted to keep connected to our customs and our Jain faith; then pass these traditions along to our children when they arrived. Going through a large printed phone directory, we searched for a “Shah” and we located a Gujarati family Sirish and Geeta Shah. They invited us over and later introduced us to Ramesh and Chetana Fofaria, who were Jain. Later that year about ten Jain families met at Pravinbhai and Artiben’s house. That was the beginning of **JSCNC**.

We started to meet casually and as more Jain families started to move in the area, our activities started growing. A few ladies (just 3 to be precise) initiated ayambel during paryushan. It seemed like a dream in USA in the early 80’s. But that was just the beginning. We began ekasnas, upvaas and ayambel in the next few years, including athais. No one in the group knew the vidhi for the complete Samvatsari pratikraman, so we did samayak instead. Later we found members who knew some sutras but not the complete Samvatsari pratikraman, so we followed it from the book and handed copies for all the attendees.

Under the guidance of Pravinbhai, we invited scholars and Pujya Acharya Sushil muniji visited our center as early as 1980. In 1982, we had our very first Jain Camp where he was our chief guest. In later years the camps became weekend activities.

In 1985, both Lalit and I were offered professional job opportunities in Juneau Alaska, however we declined the offer. We made Raleigh our home and our Jain community gave us the feeling of having our extended family which we had left behind in India. This was where we wanted to raise our two children, as this was our home.

In 1986, the Hindu society built a temple, where we were able to install a murti of Mahavir Swami and have the pratistha in the presence of Pujya Acharya Sushil muniji.

We started having more spiritual activities like swadhyays. At our monthly meetings, we had lectures on Jain philosophy and the children had pathshala classes. We made sure we did not miss meetings. It was an opportunity for us and our children to learn about the history, teachings and philosophical aspects of Jainism and meet with friends.

I had the opportunity to write and direct drama/plays depicting Jain stories and lives of Tirthankars. In 1993 we took our Diksha Mahotsav play to Pittsburg JAINA Convention. We continued such dramas with adults and children in our Mahavir Jayanti programs, through which the children learned about Jainism.

Being a growing community, it became necessary to have a central location for our monthly meetings. In 2003, Lalit, who was the liaison for **JSCNC** and **HSNC**, was able to arrange with the Hindu Society for us to have meetings in the Hindu temple, instead of member’s homes. All these years we had potluck lunches cooked by all the ladies. As the membership started

growing, Lalit decided to make it easier on the ladies and made a food table with 2 teams, where one team cooked for everyone, while the second team took a break and cooked the following month. Lalit was always looking for ways to make every activity fun and easy for everyone, with special emphasis on the children. He had a special bond with the children, he was their Lalit uncle.

Things were going in the right direction as we were learning more about Jainism, having programs like Mahavir Jayanti, Mother's Day celebrations with children and dad's cooking for mom's and serving them. Father's Day picnics in the park, Paryushan activities with Pooja opportunities for everyone at the temple, Traditional Samvatsari Pratrikaman; Camps and Highway clean-up, and service projects like Food bank volunteering, always involving our children.

However, destiny changed our lives in February 2008. We were all gathered in the temple and had our regular meeting schedule. That morning, before we came to the temple for the meeting, we stopped to pick up ice-cream for the group to celebrate our 30th Wedding Anniversary that very day. After the children's presentation and the lecture, Lalit collapsed and had a massive cardiac arrest. It was a shock to all the members present and especially to the young children who were so dear to him that Lalit uncle is no longer with us. Everyone immediately rushed to the hospital to learn that he was no more. The first of the 12 Bhavanas is Anitya bhavna in Jainism, it talks about life which is not permanent.

Our lives were changed forever from that day. It was a very tough time for Sapna, Sumeet and me. But the lessons learned from Jainism, that life is unpredictable and nothing is in our control, as everything is predestined helped us cope with the situation. I would not have survived this trauma if it were not for Jain Community, my extended family who provided me tremendous support. My **JSCNC** family has stood beside me since that day in 2008. I have no words to describe each person's love and support.

Many picked up Lalit's duties, Kamlesh Shah stepped up to take on the **JSCNC** CAMP and Pritesh Shah came forward to continue the Adopt -a-Highway program.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of this community. You came to my aid and for that I am truly grateful. I honestly feel that you are my extended family and I know you all feel this way about each other as well.

My deep gratitude to Pravinbhai for the teachings of Jainism that he initiated through monthly meetings and swadhayays and the opportunity I had to learn about Jainism while editing some of the books that he compiled for everyone.

Shub thao aa sakal vishwa (JSCNC sangh) nu avi bhavana nitya rahe.

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION

BY RENUKA, KHUSHAL & NISHIT MEHTA

It was years ago in December 1980 when we landed in Raleigh from Connecticut. We had heavy coats on, got out of the car and we thought we were in wonderland (nice warm and sunny) compared to Connecticut, which always had extreme winters.

Within few days we met some Indians who happened to be my sister's friend from East Africa, Kumud and Rajni Patel. She gave us all the information about Raleigh and the Indian community here. She informed us that there was a small temple in Raleigh. So, we decided to go and visit the temple. We wanted to meet more Indians and make friends.

Guess what? Whom did we meet? Pravinbhai. He noticed that we are new in temple. He came to us and asked if we were Jains. Well, we were in the right place at the right time. He told us that they were forming a Jain group and asked if we were interested in joining? We did not know anything in Jainism and were very interested in joining the group. What can I say, 40 years later and we are still here.

In the nineties some of us went to Samet Shikhar yatra with JAINA that was quite enriching. Vibrations from this yatra I guess affected us more.

Pravinbhai was also teaching pathshala where we had about 20 kids. The Jainism concepts they learned helped them with discipline and they also became caring professionals. Pravinbhai and Artiben also hosted lots of Jain scholars. We benefitted from their discourses and specially from our Panditji. We also attended the Jain camps for couple of nights with scholars and had a great time.

Well, all the credit goes to Artiben and Pravinbhai. They have really played a great role in JSCNC's last 40 years.

MARRYING INTO A JAIN FAMILY

BY RITCHIE ABRAHAM

In a jazz documentary I watched years ago, a musician, after hearing the famous jazz musician John Coltrane's performance, said "the music would have to go that way." I don't know much about jazz and even less about why the music "had to go that way" but I was struck by one musician's recognition of another musician's language speaking with greater force, and a clearer truth.

That recognition echoes as I briefly reflect on seven years of marriage into a Jain family. My amma and appa (*that is what our children call their grandparents Indu and Mahesh, and so do I*), masis and masas, bhais and bens welcomed me into the family, sharing with me their peaceful and purposeful language. At first, I could only appreciate on the surface as some gentle force to counter the rugged, and often less-than-rugged individualism in my consciousness and environment. The greater force, and truth of the faith revealed itself over the years not in any formal teachings but, foremost, in the embodiment of my amma and appa. Appa's and amma's gentle, mindful, and connected approach to all living things, was not conveyed to me doctrinally, but as essential to who they are. This became clear in particularly challenging life moments; times that test the depths of beliefs and composure. In those times, it became clearer and clearer to me that my appa and amma's years of devoted practice gifted them with a spiritual resolve to engage with, and understand their challenges as spiritual beings who were not seeking refuge from their challenges, but mindfully engaging with them.

My wife Nisha's life and work have been animated by the Jain values and practices that nurtured her upbringing. Compassion for others guides her life's work, channeling her values and energy into a passionate defense of women's rights.

A deep sense that we are all connected has taken Nisha to —among other places—villages in Mozambique to document the negative impact of corporate coal mining, and Saudi Arabia to record the harrowing experiences of domestic workers. She then translated those findings into impactful research, and her advocacy at the International Labor Organization (ILO). ILO overwhelmingly voted to adopt the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, establishing the first global standards for the estimated 50 to 100 million domestic workers worldwide; the vast majority of whom are women and girls. I believe that Nisha's successful advocacy for women's rights is in no small part due to her Jainism. Nisha simply exudes credibility, because her work flows naturally from who she is, a loving and purposeful human being.

As Nisha and I raise our two young girls, I am increasingly aware of the people and values that will shape them. I hope that Jainism will play a greater role in our life, to provide us with a spiritual compass, and offer some response to the temptations and attachments that characterize so much of daily life. But even as I hope to learn more about Jainism, I know enough to know that the music has to go that way.

Congratulations to Jain Study Center on its 40th Anniversary.

JSCNC – OUR NEW HOME AWAY FROM HOME

BY ROHIT, CHHAYA, POOJA & SOHIL SHAH

We sincerely celebrate the 40-year anniversary of **JSCNC**. When we moved to NC from Massachusetts, we were migrating from a big Jain Community. When we joined **JSCNC** we didn't know what to expect. However, slowly but surely everything started to feel like home again. The warmth we experienced from fellow Jains made it feel like family. We didn't know too many people to begin with, but throughout the years we have built strong relationships based on our *Dharma*. Thanks to **JSCNC**, our kids found a place where they could grow in their faith through *Pathshala*, Volunteering, *Pratikraman*, *Samayak*, and *Mahavir Jayanti* performances and celebrations. We have built a strong Jain foundation for our family, thanks to **JSCNC**.

JAI JINENDRA

MEMORIES WITH JSCNC

BY SALAUNI SHAH

I have been a part of the **JSCNC** community for about 20 years now. This community has ultimately molded me into the person that I am today. Going to pathshala twice a month for over 10 years has taught me so much about Jainism. Pathshala was just one of the many activities that I enjoyed going to. Others that just scratch the surface include Jain Camp (Camp Lalit), Highway Cleanups, and our annual Mahavir Jayanti celebrations. Through **JSCNC** I learned about and was fortunate enough to experience Veerayatan. Last summer (2019), I was given the opportunity to spend two weeks in Bihar volunteering at the local hospital, and the Tirthankar Mahavir Vidya Mandir School. This trip taught me so much about living life to the fullest, and do not take things for granted. This trip and its experience would not have been possible without the knowledge of the program from the **JSCNC** community members. It has been about a year since the trip, and every day I think about all the things that I learned from sitting with the local people, as well as Acharya Chandanaji and the other Sadhvijis there.

I am so thankful for the support that has been given from everyone in the community, and since we have been a part of this community for so long, it's been so amazing to welcome all the new families. Even though I don't come to meetings as often as I used to, it is heartwarming to see all the new faces and the younger youth knowing they will be the ones taking over in the future.

I am genuinely thankful to have grown up in the **JSCNC** community and to have learned everything from all the elders that have been with us.

MEMOIR

BY SEJAL VIKRANT NANAVATI

Living across three continents (South America, India and USA) I feel each has contributed in enriching our experience. But even though each Continent had had a part to play, I can with great convictions state that my coming to the USA in 2015 and that to settle down in Cary, North Carolina has been a divine act of God.

I still do recollect my first week in Cary, February of 2015, and via internet learning about the JSNC, attending my first monthly meeting in the HSNC temple. The warmth of being accepted from day one into the community and support from the members put my concerns to rest of bringing my family over (Sejal, Saumya and Soham) and starting a new chapter in our lives.

I consider myself fortunate that JSNC and its esteemed scholars are playing a very important role in our spiritual journey. We were acquainted with the '*kriyas*' while living in India and S. America, but the true understanding of our scriptures and Jain teachings has been initiated by the teaching of great Scholars that we are blessed to have among us. (Shree. Pravinbhai and Dr. Zota).

I would like to thank all the JSNC members from the bottom of my heart who have accepted us with open arms and warm feelings. I stay obliged.

JSCNC A CLOSED KNIT COMMUNITY **BY SHASHIN AND DIMPI CHHEDA**

I have been part of the **JSCNC** community for the past 6 years and currently part of the executive committee for the past two years.

JSCNC is a small knit community and people know each other very well and are always willing to help each other. The community has many learned and distinguished members who have contributed and have been instrumental to the growth of **JSCNC**. Their efforts also go beyond **JSCNC** and extend to JAINA and other international organizations.

Through **JSCNC** pathshala programs our kids are learning principles of Jainism and vegetarianism. They have made friends and are eager to participate in various kids activities provided by **JSCNC**.

Besides providing religious programs **JSCNC** also contributes to the local communities in Raleigh area in various forms e.g. highway cleanup, food donation drive, crop walk, etc and more recently launched JAP program to create a team of volunteers to help out senior members.

We feel blessed to be part of **JSCNC** and honored to be part of the executive committee that provides me an opportunity to serve the community.

JSCNC, LIFETIME OF LEARNING BY SHAWNAK RAJEN DOSHI

I was born in Raleigh and have spent all 24 years of my life in this community amongst **JSCNC** members who have influenced many cultural, social, and religious aspects of my upbringing.

I grew up going to **JSCNC** events for as long as I can remember. I remember going to every Jain Meeting, doing Darshan, Arti, and everything with the entire Sangh, and later all the kids would go to the back room behind the stage for Pathshala. I also have great memories of doing Puja during Mahavir Jayanti, participating in cultural shows and numerous practices, performing on stage, and even MCing the program once. Everything meant a lot to me and my little brother Sohil, but it meant a lot more to my parents (Puja & Rajen).

Little did I know the importance and impact this upbringing would have on my life for years to come. The values, teachings, and lessons I learned through Pathshala class became the foundation for my belief in Jainism. I learned the principles of Jainism and why we do what we do. I learned that we are all vegetarians because of Ahimsa, and we don't give gifts during our major holidays (Paryushan, Mahavir Jayanti, etc) because of values like Aparigraha. I also learned that we celebrate Paryushan to ask for forgiveness and repent for our sins as a community. I learned about moksha, karma, and kashaya and so much more. These are all very basic concepts but gaining this knowledge through the instruction of Pathshala classes helped me understand our culture and religion to a much deeper level. In turn, I believe this has resulted in my continued strong belief & faith to this day. I still do darshan every morning, attend Mahavir Jayanti & Paryushan year after year, and continue to be a part of the Jain community because the importance was on *why*. It helped me understand and believe in Jainism even more.

Thank you **JSCNC**!

GROWING UP WITH JSCNC

BY SHEEL SHAH

Happy 40th anniversary to the community that has been a major part of my life. Growing up, I always looked forward to the big events whether it be Jain Camp, Mahavir Jayanti, the whole week of paryushan and the small events like bimonthly paathshala. As kids, give us an incentive and we would be there. It wasn't always money or a prize, but the recognition and inclusion in activities made learning about Jainism fun. While I haven't been as involved in the past few years, I still enjoy the moments I do spend with the community. Just as much of a joy as it is for the elders to see the younger folks talk to them, it's equally a pleasure of mine to spend time with the ones that really made up the village that helped raise me and give me the foundation for the person I have become. My favorite memories come from spending nights at "Camp Lalit" in Umstead Park singing antakshari with the oldies and having a dance party with the young ones.

I am thankful to have grown up in such a tight knit community and I cannot wait to watch it grow even more.

BEING A PART OF JSCNC
BY SHILPA SHAH

Congratulations to the Jain Study Center of NC on your 40th anniversary!

This is one of the longer standing local Jain groups in North America. I remember this group first starting when I was nine years old. Specifically, I remember my father calling various Jain families in town and inviting them over for a gathering at our home that would ultimately lead to developing the organization that we know today. While I had some basic knowledge of what being Jain means, being involved in **JSCNC** brought this to a new level for me. The more I learned about Jainism, the more I wanted to learn, which then led to endless hours of discussions with my father over various aspects of Jain beliefs and practices. In addition, being part of **JSCNC** brought a sense of community for me within the religion. It showed me that my sister and I were not the only Jain kids in town, that there were several others who understood the nuances of being Jain. The religious foundation that was laid before me led to my commitment to animal compassion and environmental issues, including my decision 25 years ago to become vegan. In addition to the religious foundation, the sense of community from **JSCNC** laid a foundation that led to my involvement in Young Jains of America (YJA) in the 90's and subsequently the creation of Young Jain Professionals, (YJP).

To this day, my Jain identity plays a significant role in my day-to-day decisions, thanks largely to my parents and Jain Study Center of NC.

JSCNC MAHAVIR JANMA KALYANAK PUJA - A UNIQUE TRADITION

BY SHWETA A. SHAH



Mahavir Jayanti is a most auspicious Day celebrated by the Jain Study Center of North Carolina. Each year **JSCNC** celebrates Mahavir Janma Jayanti by performing Puja & Cultural Program in the month of April.

Puja part of the program includes Ashtaprakari Puja, Dreams of Mother Trishala, Shanti Kalash and ends with Aarti - Mangal Divo.

Our center is very unique and fortunate, as we have the entire Puja performed and recited by our youth. This has been a tradition for decades and is a great learning opportunity for children and youth ages 4 and above who can participate in the Puja.

Our youth volunteers are great role models for the younger children and youth, and help them during Puja. The younger children respond well to instructions from youth volunteers. Jain Puja Book - which used to be a collection of pages in a folder and now adopted as a book by JAINA Education Committee under the guidance of Pravinbhai has been a great resource. it is in English, and very easy for the children to follow. The children and youth participation is ever increasing over the years and last year (April 2019) we had over 55 children and youth participate. I have had the privilege to be a Puja Coordinator for the past 5 years with help from the religious committee and dedicated volunteers.

Ashtaprakari Puja Vidhi:

In this Puja we worship the Tirthankara by performing Dravya Puja. Ashtaprakari Puja is done by offering eight different Dravya/substances during the Puja. Each of the eight Pujas are a symbolic representation to acquire virtues to improve our spirituality.

1. Jal Puja
2. Chandan Puja
3. Pushpa Puja
4. Dhoop Puja
5. Deepak Puja
6. Akshat Puja
7. Naivedya Puja
8. Fal Puja

Dreams of Mother Trishala:

There are fourteen Dreams of Mother Trishala. Each of the dreams is depicted by a participant explaining the dream first and then siblings carrying the dream for Darshan by all. This is a marvelous sight and brings so much joy to our hearts when we see the little ones walk up to the stage with each dream. The audience gets the "*Labh*" (Opportunity) of doing Darshan. According to Svetambara tradition, there are fourteen dreams while according to Digambar tradition, there are sixteen dreams as follow:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Lion | 9. Golden Vase |
| 2. Elephant | 10. Lotus Lake |
| 3. Bull | 11. Ocean |
| 4. Goddess Lakshmi | 12. Celestial Plane |
| 5. Garland | 13. Heap of Jewels |
| 6. Full Moon | 14. Smokeless Fire |
| 7. Bright Sun | 15. <i>Pair of Fish</i> |
| 8. Flag | 16. <i>Lofty Throne</i> |

Shanti Kalash:

This is the highlight for our high schoolers (Seniors) heading to college for new beginnings. Families get an opportunity to participate in Shanti Kalash. Immediately after the birth of Prince Vardhman, Lord Indra, the King of heaven, arrived with other heavenly gods and goddesses.

Lord Indra hypnotized the whole city including mother Trishala and King Siddharth. He took Prince Vardhman to Mount Meru and conducted the first bathing ceremony of the newborn, The future Tirthankara. He proclaimed peace and harmony by reciting BRUHAT SHANTI during the first bathing ceremony. Shanti Kalash ritual represents the same ceremonial process that took place at Mount Meru by Lord Indra. The peace and harmony are proclaimed throughout the universe by reciting the following sutras during the ritual:

- Namaskar Mangal Sutra
- Uvasagharam Stotra
- Bruhat Shanti

Aarti & Mangal Divo:

The Puja is concluded with Aarti & Mangal Divo.

The entire Puja is a magnificent feeling where the entire Sangh including the religious committee, music mandli(team), volunteers, audience, and most importantly our children participants come together to celebrate this auspicious Kalyanak.

BEING PART OF JSCNC
BY SHWETA SHAH

Congratulations to the Jain Study Center of NC on your 40th anniversary!

The longevity of this organization is a testament to the dedication of its members and the lasting "familyships" that have been formed through the decades. The Jain group has been in existence for as long as my memory serves. Growing up I clearly remember looking forward to the monthly meetings and preparing recitations out of the blue binder to earn points towards rewards. I greatly appreciate the flexibility and progressiveness with which Jainism was taught and carry on those values in my life today.

The Jain group not only gave me a foundation in our religion but also provided an extended family in a time when so many of our parents had immigrated on their own. Over the years what I recall most fondly are the many family gatherings. Whether it be at Jain meetings, camps at Umstead Park, or Saturday evening dinner parties, countless days and hours were spent together. Growing up it felt special to be a part of our small cohort within the context of the larger Indian-based organizations.

I can trace some of my most lasting friendships to the early 1980s Jain group, and for that I feel very fortunate.

PRACTICING AHIMSA THROUGHOUT MY LIFE

BY SMITA VARIA

My name is Smita Varia. I am the youngest daughter of Mahesh and Indu Varia. Here is my contribution to the eSouvenir for the 40 years of **JSCNC**.

My childhood is filled with memories of spending Sundays with the Jain Group. While I was growing up, Jain Meetings rotated houses. On the car rides to Jain Meeting, I would practice my recitation from the Jain binder filled with prayers, songs, and stories. I would enjoy a big home cooked lunch and then would spend the afternoon playing with my friends. The Jain Group was very small in the 80s, and I was close to all the members and they all felt like extended family.

Through the monthly Jain Meetings, I learned so much about the philosophy of Jainism and how to incorporate Jain values in my everyday life. I have remained vegetarian, and I am raising my son vegetarian. And most of all, the tenant of non-violence is the core to the work that I do and the career that I have chosen. For the past 20 years, I have worked in the field of violence prevention. I have educated people on bullying, suicide prevention, sexual assault prevention and domestic violence prevention. Currently, I work for my local county government and raise awareness and educate the public on domestic violence prevention. I do presentations at schools, organizations, and meetings on how to help those that are living with violence in their homes. I work with community leaders on bringing services to those in need. All of my work has been influenced by the Jain teaching of Ahimsa.

I am grateful for all that I learned through the **JSCNC** and wish them a happy 40th year anniversary!

BEING JAIN – A PRACTICE OF SELF-DISCOVERY AND SELF-MASTERY BY SUDHIR SHAH

Today, being Jain may mean different things to different people. Historically too, Jain way of life has encompassed many things and has been practiced many ways, but at the core, it is a spiritual practice of introspection and self-discovery that can ultimately lead to self-mastery. Self-Mastery is the ability to recognize, understand, practice, and make the most out of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual self while maintaining equanimity.

Growing up in India in a Jain family, I was certainly introduced to basic Jain principles and practices. However, to the credit of my parents, I was not “indoctrinated”. In fact, I was also introduced to the works of father Wallace, Rajneesh, J. Krishnamurti, Bertrand Russell, Chardin, Khalil Gibran, Emerson and Thoreau. I soon became critical of Jain society and many of its practices as outdated and hypocritical and I removed myself from that environment. I started researching and studying Jain and other philosophies on my own.

Several years later in the USA, when I took my son to a local pathshala, I found myself disagreeing with most of the things being taught. By the end of the first class the teacher was so exasperated that she said, “why don’t YOU teach the class”. With my son’s interest in mind, I agreed. Soon I realized that for every class, I needed to prepare 30-40 hours creating new teaching material. Being an educator herself, my then wife, Anita was tremendously helpful in this endeavor. Additionally, during that time we found out about the first pathshala teachers’ conference in Raleigh conducted by our own Pravinbhai. That was my first introduction to **JSCNC** over 20 years ago and I became the recipient of the generous hospitality and love from the **JSCNC** community. Impressed by Pravinbhai’s non-dogmatic approach, we joined his effort and helped create new pathshala books and lesson plans. That was also the beginning of my journey into introspection and self-discovery. I studied scriptures through the lens of its modern-day relevance in our day to day life. More I studied, the more I saw a disconnect between the philosophy and what was being practiced. Understanding Jain karma theory, I became aware that we are the source of all our actions, our feelings, and our experiences. This in turn helps eliminate blame from my life. I took upon myself to bring about changes in many of the practices at the local Jain center and then at JAINA at the national level. I succeeded in changing some and got a push back on the others.

Throughout this period, my own study of our philosophical traditions, how human brain functions and experiences of personal and interpersonal relationships, also influenced my journey towards introspection and self-discovery. I realized that I had a lot of work to do towards self-mastery. The biggest challenge was to get past my own preconceived world view, and my desire to jump to conclusion. When one concludes, learning stops.

My guiding context in the journey of self-discovery and self-mastery came from Pierre Chardin, a French philosopher who said. “we are not human beings seeking spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings undergoing human experience”

Here are some steps that guided me through my journey.

Steps to Self-discovery

1. Be an observer and not a judge – Many of us have a tendency to judge quickly, many a time before we know all the facts. Listening and learning without judgement was a very important trait I needed to develop in exploring new ideas and respecting views of the other. I found this to be a necessary step to make any progress in collaborative efforts.
2. Be alone, solitude – I found it helpful spending time alone processing what I had just read or learned, examining my thoughts, my triggers and designing methodology to interrupt my knee jerk reactions. This was also necessary to transcend distractions that life constantly throws at you.
3. Be vulnerable – Although it is seen as a sign of weakness, it shows ultimate courage to be vulnerable. It is a cornerstone to the path of being transparent. Fear and shame are in our way of being totally transparent. Being vulnerable lets you transcend fear and shame and helps to strengthen your relationships not only with others but also with yourself. It creates an opening for you to see yourself, as you are, without any filters.
4. Be forgiving – to yourself and others. I find forgiveness much easier when I see myself and others as “just going through human experience”. In this imperfect human form, we all do things that are hurtful to ourselves and others. Forgiveness recognizes our human frailties without diminishing the value of our spiritual self and thus charts the path forward.

Steps to Self-Mastery

1. Being Aware – who am I? (ex. spiritual being undergoing human experience) Affirm who you are daily (I am love, I am grateful, I am connection, I am contribution, I am joy, I am peace etc..) and let that be the guide to all your actions and your experiences all day.
2. Make peace with the past – Our past may significantly affect our present and our future because we have a tendency to file our past into our future as a useful learning experience that we can draw upon someday. Unfortunately, our life is full of past experiences (mostly negative), we continue holding on to it as if our life depends on it. This does not provide us any room to create something new. Our future continues to look like our past. Bringing closure to our past releases its insidious grip on us and provides us freedom to create new possibilities. Imagine if you can see your spouse every day as a new person you met for the first time? You would create endless possibilities with them don't you think? This applies to all our relations, our actions, and interactions.
3. Check your Ego – Most of our thoughts, words and actions stem from our need to look good/not look bad or our need to be right/making others wrong or our need to dominate/avoid domination. Remember when you had your last argument and at the

end you even forgot what you were arguing about but all you knew that you had to win? All our hurts and emotional trauma are rooted in our ego. It robs us of connection, love, joy and peace. Jain greeting “Jai Jinendra” is a great antidote to check our ego. If we see the other person (and ourselves) as an image of Jina our attitude and our behavior will automatically shift don’t you think? Seeing ourselves and others as spiritual beings undergoing human experience also helps with this.

4. Create Empowering Context – Human beings love stories. Life is very little about what happens, it is all about the story we tell ourselves on what happened. As soon as we create the story (our narrative) we forget that it is a story and start believing that it is a reality. It becomes our “truth”. Most of these stories are disempowering and severely hinder our spiritual progress. Since they are all stories, and we are the ones who created them, why not create stories that empower us. For example, someone in your family/friend says something to you and you feel hurt. Instead of your story being he/she hurts me and is scornful, consider he/she is your teacher, they revealed your “button” to you and now you have an opportunity to neutralize it.
5. Physical Activity/Exercise – While we are undergoing human experience, we have a human body. Like any machine, it needs to be energized and maintained to function effectively. Regular physical activity, yoga, etc. not only keeps the machinery fit, it also helps keep your mind and your spirit vigilant. It is the water for your soul and your spirit.
6. Practice...practice.... practice.

I am grateful to **JSCNC** community for making me part of it and for all your love. My best wishes for its continued success and growth.

ON COMMUNITY

BY SUMEET L. BANKER

Growing up as a child of immigrants in the American South has its own unique set of challenges. It can feel like you are trapped in between two worlds, while not belonging to either. Like most teenagers, I was desperate to fit in. But I felt like I had to choose between the “Indian” and “American” parts of who I was – two seemingly disparate ways of life. During this formative phase of my life where I struggled to figure out who I was, connection with people in the Jain Study Center of North Carolina provided me with a sense of identity and belonging. I realized that I was not alone in my struggle to fit in, and that it was okay to blend elements of both identities while ultimately creating my own.

I was the only Jain kid in my class and often one of the only Jain kids at my school, but the role models I lacked at school were present in the **JSCNC**. There, I would see and interact with the “older kids.” I still remember seeing them at Jain meetings and Mahavir Jayanti and going to the movies all together in Chapel Hill after Paryushan. They always seemed to have everything figured out and proved that it is possible to find one’s way through a seemingly unending identity crisis. They provided perspective, maturity, and consistency, and shaped me into the person I am today. I looked up to them then, and I still do now.

The **JSCNC** also fostered a sense of engagement in the community that led to my career in service. I took part in activities like Adopt-a-Highway and food bank at an early age with other Jain kids and adults. I continued to stay involved in service activities throughout high school and college, but these early service events through **JSCNC** were integral in building a foundation in community service that continues for me to this day.

As much as I learned about Jainism and its core values, I learned even more about the value of community – one that celebrates successes and achievements like my medical school graduation, and one that is equally present during times of sadness and adversity like my father’s passing. Because even though the people that make up the **JSCNC** were present on both of those occasions, the collective strength of the community was also at my side.

When I think about what the **JSCNC** has achieved over the past 40 years, I am proud to say that I am a graduate and list myself as one of the “accomplishments.” I know that now, as it did then, it is continuing to make a difference in peoples’ lives and in the community.

OUR EXPERIENCE WITH JSCNC BY DR. SUNIL PRAKASHCHAND

Starting from meager origins 40 years ago, and now boasting to over more than 200 families sprawling out through the RTP area, the NC Jain society has left a huge impact on each and every family! As a group the society hosts a plethora of events each year not only including spiritual sessions for adults, but also fun and engaging religious activities for kids.

Every year in the fall, the local Jain society hosts a 2-Day spiritual camp. In the past years, the program was made especially special with the invitation of a few Samaniji's from various Jain Vishwa Bharti centers across North America. From various activities such as learning yoga in nature, to various types of Preksha meditation, interactive discourses everyone was sure to leave with tons of spiritual energy and would look forward to camp next year!

The other activities I observe are interactive workshops for youths on Jainisim in the day to day activities as youth are more interested in learning the why of things instead of just blindly following it!

As a physician the constant touch with our religion reminds me to be compassionate while treating patients.

My personal involvement for the last 10 years with JSNC have been immensely beneficial not only to the adults, but also the kids. From involvement in Mahaveer Jayanthi celebrations to learning facts about Jainism, the society has been engaging and fruitful for all of us. We wish to continue to be involved in our local Jain Society.

JSCNC AND ITS IMPACT ON US

BY TORAL MOTA AND FAMILY

Completing 40 years is a great milestone. Congratulations **JSCNC**!

We have been part of the **JSCNC** community for over a decade now. Back when we moved to Raleigh from Massachusetts, we did not have any social connections here. I was thrilled to learn about **JSCNC** and started getting involved in the community. In addition to learning and practicing Jainism, **JSCNC** has played an enormous role in developing our social network.

Pathshala has played a big role in instilling our spiritual and cultural values in our children. We have loving memories of how they attended the monthly meetings and recited Jain sutras or presented something for Mother's Day and other several events. My kids love the Mahavir Jayanti event which has provided them a fun and learning opportunity to do Puja and various rituals. I did not imagine they would get such an opportunity being in the US. They make us feel proud when they try to practice Jainism in their day to day lives and try to reason with Jain principles. This would not have been possible without the care and affection of Pathshala teachers and the community overall.

When we last visited our family in India, we were having a get-together. The conversation shifted towards a religious discussion. Our kids participated in that and explained a few items they learned from the Pathshala which pleasantly surprised everyone. They did not expect our children who have been brought up in the United States to know much about Jainism and were impressed with their knowledge on this topic. That was indeed a fine moment and we owe **JSCNC** for that.

I recall when we started attending the Sunday meetings, I had to drag the whole family to join. Ketan who initially was reluctant to attend started liking and participating in the community. Recently he served as the **JSCNC** secretary for two years. Now he is practicing becoming vegan. **JSCNC** has definitely made a positive impact on our lives.

We are very grateful to the entire community and hope we can continue to influence our next generations.

SHADOWLESS LIGHT WITHIN US

BY DR. USHA DOSHI

In July of 1985, my husband, Deepti, our first child, and I moved from Chicago to North Carolina with another child on the way. We were looking for a community to raise our children with Jain religious values, and we found that in Raleigh, NC with the **JSCNC**, then a group of 12 families that held monthly meetings at their homes.

We were welcomed whole heartedly by this community, which felt like being part of an extended family. We felt very fortunate for the rare opportunity to find a Jain group like this. We all learned the fundamentals of Jainism in a fun way - especially the children. Every child in the group received a black or blue Jain folder with readings/their homework (we still have their original folders!), and would receive rewards when they finished their lessons. Though there was no formal pathshala, the older children became role models for the younger ones. Our children have pleasant memories of taking part in the monthly meetings, paryushan, fasting, English pratikraman, Mahavir Jayanti programs, camps, and YJA leadership roles for SE region; these activities instilled in them self-confidence and kindness with compassion. They learned to accept their differences and that all living beings are equal. Pravin Uncle, pillar of **JSCNC** was and still is their teacher and “a cool uncle.” In spite of being a small center, **JSCNC** not only provided an avenue to cultivate lifelong friendships and bonds, but also, more importantly, taught us the true principles & basics of Jainism. I believe that **JSCNC** had a lasting impact on my children’s lives, impacting their career choices in social impact fields.

At the time, to the outside world, everything seemed to be going well in our family: a happy family, two doctors with three bright kids. However, life takes unforeseeable and unintentional, and sometimes tragic turns. When my youngest child was 7, I went through a severely stressful situation that eventually led to me separating from my husband after 19 years of marriage. Though he was a good hearted, generous, intelligent person, he had succumbed to a mental illness. And in spite of my constant pleading, he refused to get professional help. This ultimately led to out of control rage and violence at home, as well as a gambling spree that drained all our assets within months. At this moment in my life, the Karma theory helped me take charge of a very difficult situation, with my own actions and deeds bearing the responsibility for a better outcome. Circumstances unfavorable or favorable may come and go, but one can still choose to remain equanimous and avoid further bondage of karmas.

While I almost moved to NY to be closer to my family, I chose to stay in Raleigh only because of the Jain education my children received via the **JSCNC** and the community it had created - a decision I have never regretted. After the separation, I found a new home and was able to reshape not only my family life but also my own medical career. The Jain principles and lessons learned at the **JSCNC** and from scholars helped me immensely at this time - I often reminded myself and my children that despite his actions, their father did not mean to hurt us.

Around this time, visiting scholars from India would attend our **JSCNC** meetings, and a visit from one scholar, Shri Ramnikbhai Savla, was particularly impactful for me. Given his background having lived and worked in the US, I felt as though I could relate to his explanations on the Jain philosophy. He happened to see me - at my good & bad times and knew I was in search of something to cling onto, to bring myself together and to have some feeling of relief as a single parent. He gave me a mantra to say as I wake up, eat, bathe, drive, and sleep. Even though I did not understand it at the time, he said that I would understand the deeper meaning of this mantra over time and with more studies : “ ાનાનદ વ પી ભગવાન આ મા અન સવ થા સવ થી ભ ” meaning, “By nature, I am full of Gnan (ability to know) and Anand (bliss) and happiness. I am always separate from everything, everyone and even my own feelings in this world.”

Despite not knowing the deep adhyatmik meaning of this phrase then, I trusted his advice and I used to chant and tried to separate myself whenever I was upset. I felt inner peace and empowered; it made evident who I am actually. What I have been thinking was an illusion. Like milk that has water mixed in it but appears as milk only, however we know milk and water by evaporation can be separated because they are separate by nature. Similarly though soul and physical body/feelings appear one, they are separate by nature and can be separated. According to Gatha 3 of Samaysaar, the bible of Jainism-- “એક દ્રવ્ય બીજા દ્રવ્ય ને અડતું નથી, સ્પર્શતું નથી કે બીજા દ્રવ્ય નું કરતો નથી, કે કરાવતો નથી ”, meaning “one substance, living or nonliving, cannot change or hurt or do other substance’s work.” So, no one can hurt me nor I can hurt or do work for anyone living or nonliving. If I think I am making rotis or raising children, it is an illusion. The so-called misery I went through, in reality never touched me – my soul remained untouched, unaffected, fully safe, and blissful. I was unaware and ignorant about it and invited my own misery. That was a powerful lesson.

Here are some other lessons which I learned:

- That soul or atma jyoti or “Gnanajyoti”, I call Shadowless Light within oneself is powerful, independent extraordinary energy - an actual thing and immortal within each living being. It is always available & never dies no matter how much one suffers depression, anxiety, anger, and misery. It is full of illuminance yet invisible, not perceived by our 5 senses, full of bliss and peace that no power in the world can ever destroy or change it. Things around me including my own emotions, like in a mirror, are just being reflected in this undivisible Gnanajyoti as I am just a knower of everything around me and not a doer. This understanding though difficult helped me to remove kartutva bhav: meaning I am a doer, I did this or that which inevitably follows expectations and/or ego.
- I needed to change my belief and view of looking at things. It is easy to say but hard to put into practice, especially under unfavorable circumstances while we are living in sansaar or worldly life with its misery. But, Jainism says it is possible and we have living proof in our gurus and acharyas who achieved self-realization before achieving keval gnan and Nirvana, while they were in sansaar with its misery like us e.g. Shrimadji. They discovered their Shadowless Light with their own quest with genuine introspection with

interest and sincerity. If they could, anyone can! This was very inspiring and a driving force for me to carry on with.

- Self-realized saints like Bahenshri Champaben also advise us in her Vachanamrut “તું જાગતો જીવ છે.. બંધ સમયે તું ચેત, ઉદય સમયે શાં ઉચાટ ” meaning: be alert and watchful of your thoughts/actions during bad or good times as they will bond as new karmas which in turn will rise making one feel miserable.
- Circumstances good or bad are always temporary unlike our soul with Shadowless Light within us that remains permanent.
- With regards to my children’s success, I just happen to be there, as Nimit only. Nimit by definition is mere presence of a person or a thing that becomes favorable at that particular time when desired activity happens but by itself does not do anything =નિમિત્ત અકિંચિત્કર છે. This helped to remove ego/rudeness and kartabhav (that I am the doer). Social change has been the
- focus of all of their careers, I believe, as a result, of their exposure to **JSCNC**, despite the adversity they faced in their childhoods.

We are facing tough times with coronavirus. During such times, our Jainism principles can help us to remain calm, avoid anxiety & fear and dweshbhav: ill feeling for a virus which is also a living being.

As **JSCNC** celebrates its 40th anniversary we as a family feel proud to be part of a wonderful organization that helped foster values of compassion, nonviolence, self-confidence and a zeal for social change in our children. Congratulations for a job well done, **JSCNC!**

It is said there is light at the end of the tunnel. Jainism says there is always a Shadowless Light within you wherever you are. Let it be your guide to your ultimate path of happiness.

OUR JOURNEY WITH JSCNC FOR 27 YEARS BY ZOTA FAMILY

Congratulations to the Jain Study Center for North Carolina (**JSCNC**) for completing 40 years. We hope to be there for your 50th golden anniversary. I would like to personally dedicate the **JSCNC** 40th anniversary to Pandit Dirubhai Mehta who passed away in July 2020.

We have been part of the **JSCNC** for 27 years. For the first 15 years we were in Fayetteville, NC, where we used to live while I had my medical practice in Raeford, NC. Even then, we used to come regularly to the monthly meetings and weekly swadhyaya.

JSCNC has had a large impact on me, Lata, and my family. Here are some of the highlights:

- Due to the **JSCNC** library, I was exposed to the vast Jain Darshan literature and was able to do a lot of reading that helped me develop ruchi and an interest in Jainism.
- Through the many visits from scholars and pandits, I learned a lot and formed a much stronger foundation of learning and knowledge.
- I consider Pandit Dirubhai Mehta to be my Guru and Swami Shutprangji to be my Nimit Guru
- As a result of my family's long-standing active participation, we have learned a lot and have all been deeply affected.
- My three daughters have deep empathy for human compassion.
- Sejal did one year of social service in India and today she is a lawyer for an NGO and defends documented and undocumented immigrants.
- Ami did one year of social work in India and today she is a leading scientist who works on the health impacts of environmental pollution on women and children and the poor.
- Rita worked in White House for 6 years when Obama was president on education reform.
- Lata has become involved in multiple anuthans, such as swadhyaya, samaik, and ambil group.
- Lastly, I have developed an interest in Jain tatva darshan. For the past 24 years, Lata and I have participated in monthly meetings and weekly swadhyaya.

JSCNC has had a major impact on our lives, and for that, we will be thankful to **JSCNC** forever. **JSCNC** organizes and conducts many useful activities for the community. Among my favorites are the monthly meetings, patshala, scholar visits, and the Mahavir Jayanthi celebration. Thank you **JSCNC** for welcoming us into the community and helping us grow into better individuals and community members.

Congratulations on 40 years and looking forward to 50TH Golden Anniversary.

APPENDIX

JAINA EDUCATION BLOG

Jainism: Know It, Understand It & Internalize It

Enriching Experience in Practicing Jainism

Written by: Sejal Shah (Blog Committee member, **JSCNC**), July 2020

Blog Coordinator: Pratiksha Shah (Virginia)

Blog Adviser: Pravin K. Shah (**JSCNC**)

Story Behind the Blog

When it comes to religion, it is an extremely difficult task to challenge a belief system that has been held on for many years. It requires courage, dedication, calmness, open-mindedness, and commitment, to push past those beliefs and come to conclusions based on sound reasoning.

Pravin K. Shah, a founding member of **JSCNC**, had a vision to document answers to the questions that had been raised by the youth to their pathshala teachers, parents, and/or Jain scholars. There are wide range of questions from, basic to complex ones that involve experiences of modern times on various topics like - Ahimsa, Rituals, Environmental impact, Women Equality, Social Issues, Cleanliness, Health and Medicines, Profession/Business, Penance, Philosophy, Literature, and many others.



After multiple unsuccessful attempts, Pravinbhai's vision started to take shape at the start of 2019. Thanks to the Jain Education Workshops conducted in Raleigh, one of the attendees, Pratiksha Shah from Virginia, rose to the challenge to create a team and coordinate the blog activity.

In May 2019, Jaina Education Committee launched a new blog called "[**Jainism: Know It, Understand It & Internalize It**](#)" under the leadership of Pratiksha and guidance of Pravin Shah.

Purpose

The purpose of the blog is

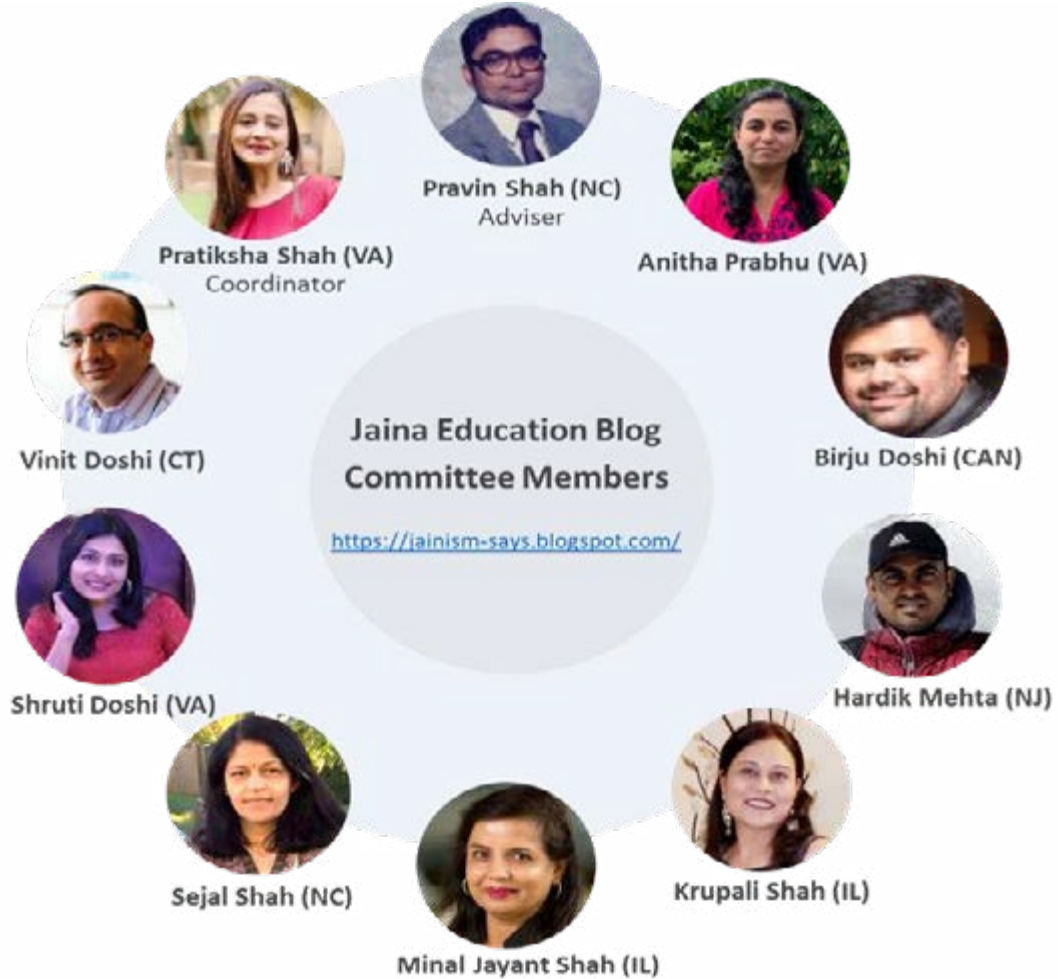
- to deepen individuals' understanding about Jain values/principles
- to create a positive and enriching experience about the religion
- to enhance spiritual growth
- to answer questions for curious minds who want to understand rather than follow blindly



Jaina Education Blog Committee

For over 35 years, Pravin Shah has researched Jain literature and scriptures in pursuit of finding informed answers to the questions and come to conclusion based on sound reasoning. In addition to his in-depth knowledge of Jainism, he also has a deep understanding of life as a Jain in the United States.

This blog is written by the committee members, who are from various backgrounds and from various geographic locations within the USA and Canada.



Approach for Addressing Questions

The [guiding principles](#), set and documented by the blog committee members, which include the fundamentals concepts of basics of Jainism are used as reference to answer each question. The responses aid in bringing clarity, so that the individuals can use their own logic and wisdom to derive answers for themselves.

As of July 2020, the committee has published 20 articles related to Ahimsa, Rituals, Yoga and Meditation, Spirituality during COVID-19 pandemic, and Climate Crisis.



20+
Articles



Readers from
20+ Countries



100,000+
Views



500+
Comments

Impact

These articles have provided thought-provoking insights to thousands of people across the globe, from countries including USA, India, United Kingdom, UAE, Canada, Japan, Australia, Germany, Spain, Singapore, France, Kenya, Italy, Switzerland, South Korea, and Indonesia.

There are numerous comments on each article, and it has provided a platform for people to share their views and have further dialogue on these challenging topics. People are conscious, logical, want to do the right thing and use their own wisdom, instead of following anything blindly.

In addition to providing a great learning opportunity for all Blog committee members, these blogs have become an instrumental part for many Jain pathshala classes all over the US and beyond. These blog Q&As are being used by Pathshala teachers (as part of their Pathshala curriculum) and parents to have meaningful discussions and have created a favorable environment for their students and children.

Topics Covered

Ahimsa

[Is Ignorance Acceptable in Jainism](#)

[Dairy Products Usage and Consumption](#)

[Jainism view on Eggs Consumption](#)

[View on Alcohol Consumption](#)

[Jainism view on wars, fighting for](#)

[Is Jainism becoming a Kitchen Religion?](#)

[Five senses and their role in Jainism](#)

[Jainism view on having a Pet](#)

[Eating Naturally Dead Animal's Meat](#)

[Usage of Animals for Medical](#)

COVID-19 Pandemic

Spiritually navigating COVID-19 Crisis

Rituals

Yoga and Meditation in Jainism

Jain Rituals - Why, How, What

Climate Crisis

What is climate crisis and what causes it?

Why, as Jains, should we care about our environment?

Way Forward



The Committee plans to address questions on the following topics:

- Gender Equality
- Rituals
- Social Issues
- Cleanliness
- Penance
- Profession/Business
- Philosophy, etc.

Personal Reflection

First and foremost, I want to take this opportunity to show my appreciation and gratitude to the most dedicated team lead, Pratiksha Shah, for making Pravin uncle's dream come true. Pratiksha has been the glue that has kept all the team members connected. I feel so humbled and blessed to be a part of an excellent team and learning from each one of them. It has been quite a meaningful journey.

This has given me an opportunity to confront my own beliefs, do research, and then choose the right path. The times are changing and the young generation is not ready to accept any answers just blindly or without logical explanation. Being a part of this committee has enabled me to answer the questions of my own children and pathshala students in a practical way.

Thank you, Pravin uncle, Pratiksha, and all the blog committee members.

ખૂબ ખૂબ અનુમોદના!!



JAIN EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

An incredible opportunity to learn Jainism

Written by: Sejal Shah (July 2020)



Workshop Moderator: Mr. Pravin K. Shah
(Chairperson of JAINA Education Committee, Cary, NC)
Workshop Coordinator: Sejal Shah
(JSCNC, Raleigh, NC)

Although Mr. Pravin K. Shah needs no introduction, it is important to recognize his achievements as one of the founders of Jain Study Center of North Carolina (JSCNC), a well-known and beloved scholar, and a local and national leader for Jain education.

Vision



For many years Pravinbhai has worked hard to share his knowledge of Jainism to adults and youths alike. He had often envisioned holding an organized learning environment with structured lesson plans for students (of any age) to gain knowledge in the principles of Jainism via interactive sessions.

In 2017, this idea finally came to life. The first workshop was held in Raleigh, North Carolina, on a weekend in October 2017.

This first workshop welcomed 49 attendees from all around the USA, and one even from the UK.

Its objective was to take Jainism beyond just being a religious identification for people, to discussing the fundamentals and how they can be applied in our daily life. The workshop nudged the attendees to challenge their limiting beliefs, and expand their understanding of Jainism, by exploring new possibilities.

The workshop did not just include mere teachings of the principles of Jainism, but it also practiced those principles. Pravinbhai insisted on imposing the least *himsa* as possible to our bodies, and to mother earth. He accomplished this by providing totally vegan, non-fried, healthy food, served on eco-friendly and biodegradable paper products.

The first workshop surpassed Pravinbhai's expectations. Due to the overwhelming success and demand from the attendees to learn more, Pravinbhai conducted another 8 workshops.

Past Workshops



A total of 9 workshops were held over two years. 3 workshops were held in Raleigh (NC), and 1 each in Atlanta (Georgia), Washington DC, Milpitas (CA), Dallas (TX), Buena Park (CA), and Chicago (IL).

An average of 45 attendees, ranging from 16 years and above, participated at each workshop at the nominal registration fee of \$50/person. All past JAB participants and Jain pathshala teachers' registration fees were waived. The registration fee covered all meals and printed copies of workshop materials, which included more than 300 slide presentations along with reference books.

Workshop Topics



A wide range of topics were covered in depth during the 2 ½ days of the workshop. These included:

- ***Fundamentals of Jainism***
- ***Karma Philosophy and its practical applications***
- ***14 Gunsthanak***
- ***7 or 9 Tattvas***
- ***Punya & Paap Karma***
- ***Path of Liberation***
- ***Jain Way of Life***
- ***A Holistic approach to Jain Diet***
- ***Jain Universe/Geography***

- *Jain Scriptures*
- *And many more...*

Virtual Workshops



Pravinbhai was planning to have a more advanced series of workshops starting this year. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, he decided to hold virtual workshops via the WebEx platform.

These workshops are held twice a week and designed particularly for the convenience of attendees in different time zones around the world. The first workshop is held on Wednesday evenings, for the convenience of USA attendees. The second, on Monday mornings (for the convenience of attendees from different countries around the world like India, UK, Australia, Kenya, UAE, etc.)

Benefits of Virtual Workshops



The most important benefit of the virtual workshops is the convenience of attending the sessions from the comfort of one's own home. These workshops are completely free of any cost, while hosting an average attendance of 90+ every week.

All virtual sessions are also recorded. This provides an added benefit for attendees to review the sessions, and even catch-up, for those who might have missed them.

All sessions are conducted primarily in the English language. This has been beneficial in multiple ways:

- Teachers are able to get answers for their Pathshala students
- Parents are able to provide logical answers for their children in the perspective of current environments
- People from different faiths have been able to understand and deepen their knowledge about Jainism especially as sessions are conducted in English

These workshops have received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Feedback ranging from “*please, never stop these sessions*” to “*very beneficial for both teachers and parents.*” Many parents have even commented that they have made Pravinbhai’s discourses a family event every Wednesday evening!

How to Join Virtual Workshops

For Wednesday sessions:

Timings: 9:00pm - 10:00pm EST which is 6:00-7:00pm PST & 6:30am-7:30am India time (Thursday morning).

To join, Please Click: [Join Wednesday Session](#)

OR join directly from www.webex.com using the meeting number option:

Meeting number: **132 962 3875**

Meeting password: **Mahavir**

For Monday sessions:

Timings: 11:30am - 12:30pm EST which is 8:30-9:30am PST & 9:00pm-10:00pm India time.

To Join, Please Click: [Join Monday Session](#)

OR join directly from www.webex.com using the meeting number option:

Meeting number: **132 324 2145**

Meeting password: **Mahavir**

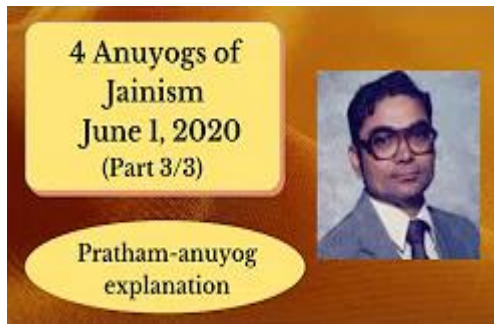
Topics Covered in Virtual Workshops

Topics covered from April, 2020 (since global virtual workshops began) to July 2020:

- ***Fundamental Concept of Jain Philosophy***
- ***Fundamental Concept of Jain Karma Philosophy***
- ***Four Anuyogs in Jainism and their limitations***
- ***Jain Geography***

Workshop Recordings

All recorded sessions, which include PowerPoint presentations and Q&A, are made available at the [Jain e Library](#) website after the completion of each session. The recordings are posted as playlists for easy accessibility on YouTube under the **Jain Workshop USA** channel. The recordings are labelled with related topic names, date and content description for easy searching. The recorded Q&A sessions are also individually classified, labelled and posted to the same channel.



Statistics from May & June 2020



90+ Subscribers



2200+ Views



80+ Recordings

Contact Information



For more information or queries, please contact the workshop coordinator, Sejal Shah, at jainworkshopusa@gmail.com or Pravin K. Shah at jainaedu@gmail.com or (919) 859-4994

A Few Pictures

Dedicated volunteers of **JSCNC**:

From left (front): Gita Mehta, Mira Shah, Pravin Shah, Arti Shah, Sejal Shah

From left (back): Pritesh Shah, Akshat Patel, Bhairav Shah



Classroom setting at the 2nd Raleigh Workshop:



Interactive discussion during the workshop session:



Group picture of the first workshop in Raleigh, NC:



Group pic of Milpitas Workshop:



Classroom Pic from 1st Raleigh Workshop:



During the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the Executive Committee of the Jain Study Center of North Carolina (**JSCNC**) was trying to decide how to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the formation of **JSCNC**.

Dr. Indu Varia came up with a wonderful idea to capture old records and documentation in order to create a montage of **JSCNC**'s 40-year history. The committee accepted the idea and decided to act upon it. At that time though, this was thought to be a quick and easy task, but it turned out not to be the case.

To gather **JSCNC**'s 40-years of history - its newsletters, activities, events, and the documentation and pictures that record them - was a difficult, tedious, and time-consuming task. As one might imagine, these physical records produced prior to the emergence of the internet and digital photography, were stored in various members' old cabinets, storage boxes and picture albums. It was time to dig them out!

This was no small feat. Though it was the committee who took the lead with the idea, it certainly could not have been accomplished without the cooperation and participation of the entire **JSCNC** community. For that, the committee immensely thanks the community for sharing their personal experiences and records.

More importantly, the committee encourages everyone to take some time and visit the **JSCNC** website - <http://jscnc.org> - with their families, and enjoy the fruits of their own labor by virtually experiencing the amazing montage of **JSCNC**'s storied history in its entirety.

A project of this scale, requiring input from many past and present members, is bound to have missed a few facts and details.

The **JSCNC** Executive Committee and eSouvenir Committee wants its members to know that any errors or omissions of facts or details are UNINTENTIONAL and wishes to ask for your FORGIVENESS.

We humbly ask all the members, and their families and friends, for a sincere...

 **MICHHAMI DUKKADAM** 

