



JAIN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION

**Bhagwan Mahavir
Professorship of Jain Studies**

**Bhagwan Adinath
Professorship of Jain Studies**

A JERF Newsletter

Issue No. 11 - Jan 2018

Perpetual centers of Jain studies were established at Florida International University in April 2010 and at University of North Texas in September 2016 to study and share rich Jain philosophy and heritage.

Bhagwan Mahavir Nirvana and Janam Kalyanak Lectures



Prof. Gary Francione on Animal Rights, Jainism and Veganism. Prof. Kristi Wiley on Life: Subtle Elements
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JERF University of North Texas Initiative



JERF established a perpetual Bhagwan Adinath Professorship of Jain Studies at University of North Texas, Dallas
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International Conference on Forgiveness

Samanis were invited by Prof. Tara Sethia to conference on Forgiveness organized by Ahimsa Center of the California State Polytechnic University at Pomona
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JERF and FIU Welcomes Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya



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JVB Houston Organized Workshop on Santhara and Conflict Resolution through Anekantvada



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Annual Bhagwan Mahavir Nirvan and Janma Kalyanak Lectures at FIU

Jainism, Animal Rights and Veganism by Dr. Gary Francione, and Life's Subtle Form by Dr. Kristi Wiley

On Nov 9, 2017, FIU's Jain Studies Program hosted Prof. Gary Francione of Rutgers University who gave the Bhagwan Mahavir Nirvan Kalyanak Lecture on 'Animal Rights, Jainism and Veganism'. His lecture focused on *Ahimsa* and *Anekantvada* in context of animal rights. The talk brought to light that doctrines of Jainism is consistent with promoting veganism.



On Mar 7, 2017 Annual Bhagwan Mahavir Janma Kalyanak Lecture was delivered by Dr. Kristi Wiley of University of California, Berkeley, discussing the notion of life form at a micro level. The notion of *Nigoda* and one-sensed beings in context of *Karma* theory of Jainism was well brought into discussion.

EDITORS

Dr. Samani Satya Pragma
Dr. Samani Rohini Pragma
Dr. Nirmal Baid

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Dr. Samani Satya Pragma
Dr. Samani Rohini Pragma

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Installation Ceremony of the Bhagwan Adinath Professorship of Jain Studies at UNT

Following the recent signing of the agreement between the Jain Education and Research Foundation (JERF) and the University of North Texas (UNT) for establishment of an endowed professorship of Jain studies, the formal announcement of the professorship was made by the President Neal Smatresk of UNT at a major event at the university. The event was attended by

Studies being established by JERF. With Jain communities across USA joining together in establishing Jain Studies in US academia, we are truly witnessing a renaissance in Jain Studies here.

- The purpose of these professorships is to,
- Enhance the collaboration among universities everywhere to inject into their undergraduate and graduate curricula, the study of Jain philosophy and its principles
 - Form a network of Jain Scholars worldwide to advance research in Jain Studies, and
 - Increase the number of future specialists in Jain Studies by supporting graduate research.



Samani Sanmati Pragma, Samani Jayant Pragma, Samani Satya Pragma, Samani Rohini Pragma, leaders of Jain communities from all over USA, academic community of the University and other luminaries. The event was held at the University of North Texas, Denton campus on Sep 30, 2016.

Prof. George James, a professor of religion and philosophy at UNT, was named as the Bhagwan Adinath Professor of Jain Studies.

After the establishment of the Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship of Jain Studies at the Florida International University, this is the second endowed professorship of Jain

A check for the commitment of \$500,000 was presented to President Smatresk. The Chief Guest of the ceremony was Indian Consul General at Houston, Mr Anupam Ray. The program started with Navkar Mantra recited by Samanis followed by introductory speech by Dr. Samani Rohini Pragma. She spoke on the mission of JERF and commended the board, executive committee and supporters. Dr. Kirti Jain, chairperson of JERF delivered his lecture on Jain doctrines. The master of the ceremony was Mr. Anant Jain, and the event concluded with a vegetarian dinner.

International Conferences and Academic Trips



International Conference on “Giving and Forgiving”

The International Conference on the theme of Giving and Forgiving was organized by Ahimsa Center of the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA. The notable feature of the conference was presentations consisting of - film screening, movies, live experiences, neuroscientific outcomes associated with the practice of forgiveness, along with philosophical and practical initiatives in the direction of forgiveness. Dr. Tara Sethia and Dr. Nirmal Sethia were the pioneers in making this conference a grand success.

Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya made presentation of their research paper entitled "Preksha Meditation and Cultivation of Amity, Compassion and Humility". Venu Mehta, a student associated with the Jain Studies program at FIU made her presentation on "Anekantvada as the Pedagogy of Education to Foster Forgiveness". Hundreds of international scholars and students participated in this conference.

Guest Lecture at Shivanada Ashram of Bahamas

At Shivanada Ashram Yoga Retreat of Bahamas Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya were invited to present the guest lecture on “Applied Nonviolence and Jainism” . The talk consisted of four steps of training in nonviolence developed by H.H. Acharya Shree Mahapragya ji. The lectures also followed by practical session. The workshop on relaxation was organized on day two. The participants appreciated the practical session of relaxation after learning the spiritual cum scientific



Visit to SOAS at University of London

Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya along with Samani Kusum Pragya, Samani Punya Pragya, and Samani Unnat Pragya attended the Graduation ceremony of Samani Pratibha Pragya, who is the first Jain nun to receive a degree outside India. Prof. Peter Flugel is her research director, and her dissertation is on “Historical Development of Preksha Meditation”. Samanis also visited SOAS to meet Prof. Flugel and discussed notions of Jainism and comparative studies.



aspect of this practice.

THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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JERF and FIU Welcomes Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya

Prof. Erick Larson, Department of Religious Study Chair at FIU welcomed Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya at the departmental meeting. JERF BOD and EC members extended their warm welcome to Samanis.

Prof. Samani Satya Pragya was initiated by Ganaadhipati Gurudev Tulsi in 1991. She completed her Bachelors, Masters, NET and PhD in Jain Philosophy. Since 1991 she is a part of Department of Non-Violence and Peace Studies at Jain Vishva Bharti University, Ladnun, India. At present she heads this department. She has been a guide for a number of PhD students and teaches regularly.

She has travelled across India and abroad to participate in a number of national and International conferences. She was editor of the Preksha Dhyana monthly magazine for more than two years. She has also published many articles and have conducted various camps, workshops, training classes. She had published a number of books, one of which is based on her PhD dissertation on the topic of Gyataadharmakatha: A Critical Analysis. She has also published course books for the distant education learners. Samani was the chief director of the Acharya Tulsi Janma Shatabdi Video editing project. She was awarded 'Rashtra Bhasha Gaurav' for her contribution to Hindi language and literature at Allahabad University, India. She will be offering Sanskrit language and literature courses along with Meditation and Spiritual Development at FIU.

Prof. Samani Rohini Pragya was initiated by H.H. Acharya Mahapragya in the year 2002. She completed her Bachelors and Masters in Accountancy from Gujarat

university before becoming a Samani. She then completed her MA M.Phil, NET and PhD in Jainology, Comparative Philosophy and Religious Study. Currently, Samani Rohini Pragya is an Associate Professor in the department of Non-Violence and Peace Studies at Jain Vishva Bharti University, Ladnun, India. Samani is currently a visiting instructor at FIU. She has been a regular faculty at JVBI and has participated and presented her research at many national and international conferences. She has also published a number of articles in research and non-research journals and magazines. She was the coordinator of International Summer School Program of JVBI for four years. Samani Rohini Pragya was the chief director and translator of Acharya Tulsi Video editing project. She has delivered guest lectures at universities in India and abroad. Her PhD dissertation, "Jain View of Reality Hermeneutic Interpretation" is in the process of publication from the Lexington Book Series from United States. She has also conducted many workshops, camps and training courses.

Samaniji Celebrated Paryushana Parva at Jain Temple Miami

Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya were invited by the Jain Temple of South Florida, Miami to celebrate *Parushan Mahaparva*, 2017. The auspicious days of *Paryushan* were celebrated with full of delight and tapasyas. Discourses were held everyday discussing life sketch of Lord Mahavir, Jain History and Practices. Workshop on Forgiveness and Preksha Mediation were organized with practical sessions during these auspicious days. Samvatsari Mahaparva and Kshmayachana day were observed with entire Jain Community getting together at the temple. A large number youth also participated in the samvatsari pratikraman. A number of shravaks also did paushads. Many members of the community along with youths observed Jain fasting of varying length.



JERF and Professorship Activities

JERF BOD Meeting

The annual meeting of JERF board of directors was organized in Miami in the presence of Samani Satya Pragya and Samani Rohini Pragya in April 2017. Arpita Khajanchi the Treasurer presented the Current financial status of JERF. The board discussed and planned for future JERF activities. Dr. Steven M. Vose, Director, Jain Studies Program presented a report on the activities of the Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship at FIU.



Prof. Suman Kakar Attends ISSJS

FIU Prof. Suman Kakar, of the Department of Criminal Justice, received a Bhagwan Mahavir Faculty Summer Fellowship from the Jain Studies Program to attend the International Summer School for Jain Studies' 6-week program. Prof. Kakar's research interests concern police interactions with youth. She attended the ISSJS program to learn how Jain ethics and principles of conflict resolution may lead to more compassionate policing of youth. A lecture is planned for the spring semester for Prof. Kakar to share her experiences and research with the FIU and South Florida community.

Prof. Vose Publishes Article on Jain Stotras in Medieval India

Prof. Vose published an article in a special issue of the *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (Dec. 2016) on the various uses of *stotras* in premodern India. Prof. Vose's article examines the *citra-kavya* and *ashtabhasha stotras* of Shri Jinaprabhasuri, a Khartar Gacch muni. Prof. Vose shows that these forms of stotras were important

both to show devotion to the Jinas and to display the monk's wide range of learning in the context of the *kavi-goshthis*, gatherings of poets in which Jain monks displayed their learning and poetic skill in order to receive patronage from their sponsors. Prof. Vose's research shows that these forms of poems continued to be popular into the 18th century, despite not conforming to the standards of *kavya* as set forth by poeticians as Abhinavagupta and Anandavardhana, who himself also composed a lengthy *citra-kavya stotra*, the *Devishataka*. Multi-language hymns are still composed today.

Prof. Vose Delivers Roop Lal Jain Lecture at University of Toronto

On February 16, 2017, Prof. Steven Vose delivered the Roop Lal Jain Memorial Lecture at the University of Toronto, Canada. The title of his lecture was, "Śrīmad Rājacandra, the Modern Jain: Locating 'Modernity' and 'Tradition' in the Biography and Works of a Late Nineteenth-Century Jain Renegade. In the talk, Dr. Vose examined the distinctively modern features of Śrīmad Rājacandra's works, exploring his relationship with



Mahatma Gandhi and his understanding of the state of Shwetambar Jain gacchas of the time. He also examined his biographers' emphasis of special features of his life story, such as his performance of *avadhana* as modern ways of demonstrating Śrīmad Rājacandra's extraordinary spiritual advancement by using distinctively traditional Indian categories in ways that conform to modern empirical (scientific) methods. The Roop Lal Jain Memorial Lecture

Series is the longest running Jain academic program in North America.

Prof. Vose continues his research on Śrīmad Rājacandra and has presented in October at the Annual Conference on South Asia, hosted by the University of Wisconsin (Madison), on the use of the photographs and *pratimas* of Śrīmad Rājacandra.

Prof. Vose Attends Int'l Conferences

Prof. Vose was invited to the second annual conference on Jainism and Sikhism at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, CA in February 2017. Prof. Vose presented on the differing attitudes toward war in Jain literature, focusing on Hemacandra's *Trisasti-Shalaka-Purusha-Caritra*. Prof. Vose argues that the changing stance on war in Jain literature can be traced to a change in Jain ethics that moves from placing prime importance on the consequences or outcomes of acts to the actors' intentions behind their actions. Prof. Vose raised the question of whether this can be explained as a historical evolution in Jain ethics or if this is a key distinction between mendicant and lay ethics.

Prof. Vose attended three conferences this fall, including the European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR), in Leuven, Belgium, where he presented on the changing engagement between scholars and the Jain communities. Drawing on his own experience, Prof. Vose argued that the "world religions" model of creating general knowledge about Jainism is limited in several ways, especially in the way that the knowledge produced tends to be of interest only to other scholars. He proposed instead that scholars begin to take on a more "dialogical" approach to writing about Jainism and about Jains, arguing that open dialogue between scholars and the Jain community can help

JERF and Professorship Activities

to make academic interests understandable to the community, especially as Jains living in the diaspora seek to develop their own forms of the tradition and to engage with major philosophical and ethical issues in global contexts. Prof. Vose pointed to the relationships that those who study Jain philosophy tend to form with Jain intellectuals in India and abroad and proposes that this may be a productive model for historians and social scientists.

In addition to his conference presentation in Madison, WI, discussed above, in late November Prof. Vose and the Samanis will attend the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR).

Prof. Vose completed his 3-year term on the Religion in South Asia Unit's Steering Committee and assumed the role of lead Chair of the Jain Studies Unit, of which he has been co-Chair for the previous two years. Prof. Whitney Kelting of Northwestern University, who delivered the Sixth Mahavir Jayanti Lecture, will become co-Chair. Prof. Vose continues to advocate for young scholars and graduate students to present at this prestigious conference; he is Chair of the "New Directions in the Study of South Asian Religions" panel, which will feature two promising young scholars of Jainism, Julie Hanlon (Univ. Chicago) and Lynna Dhanani (Yale). This is the first-time Dr. Samanis Satya and Rohini Pragya

attended the AAR conference held in Boston.

Prof. Vose will also present a paper at the 20th Jaina Studies Workshop at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London in March 2018. Prof. Vose will give a retrospective on the previous 30 years of scholarship on Jainism and will discuss new models for bringing the "lived religions" approach into dialogue with the Jain communities who have taken an increasing interest in scholarship.

Students of Jain Studies received Rajiv-Latika Fellowship at FIU

Venu Mehta and David St. John graduated from the Jain Studies fellowship. Venu's research examines Jain Diaspora in United States while David's research compares Jain Aprigraha and The Quaker Principle of non-ownership. Venu Mehta is now a PhD student in Religious Studies at the University of Florida, Gainesville and is researching on the same topic mentioned above and David is now a PhD student in the Asian Studies Department at the University of Texas at Austin and continuing his research.



Born in a Jain family, I have been fortunate to be inherited with Jain culture and rituals. Post my Bachelors study as an electrical engineer from MNM Jain Engineering College, Chennai, I pursued my Masters in Jainology from JVBI, Ladnun. Currently, I am pursuing Masters in Religious Studies at FIU with a thesis concentration in Jain studies and have been awarded with Latika and Rajeev Jain scholarship program. My research work is oriented towards the role of *avadhijāna* (clairvoyance) in Jain scripture, philosophy and literature.
- Kuldeep Bohara

Bindesh Shah Awarded at JAINA Convention 2017

JERF president and Miami Jain center director, Bindesh Shah received 'JAINA Adult Recognition Award' at the 19th Biennial JAINA convention held in New Jersey. This award is given for his contributions to JAINA, JERF, Miami Jain center, and the Jain community and his unselfish devotion for the advancement of Jainism, and community.

He was instrumental in building the Jain center facility for the local community and currently serving as a board of director. For last two years, he has led JERF activities in his capacity as President and expanded JERF activities.



Samanis' Activities



Preksha Meditation Club at FIU

Preksha Meditation (PM) Club and Law collage of FIU hosted many events on Preksha Meditation. The topics discussed were, Preksha: What and How, Components of PM, Steps of Practice, Asanas, Pranayam, Kayotsarg, Mudra and Balancing of Five Elements so on and so forth. Nearly 90 students are members of the Preksha Meditation Club. Many FIU Alumnus regularly participate and volunteer in these sessions. Gabriel Macarty, Alex Macarty and Valeria Macarty were the trainers of Preksha events in the Law collage of FIU. Venu Mehta and Nazmual, President of Preksha club and the board actively managed the club activities in 2016-2017.

Preksha Meditation was also guided in the beginning of Indian Cultural club on the occasion of Diwali event. Preksha Meditation was offered to students of FIU from different disciplines at Samanis' residence twice.

Academics

Prof. Steven Vose, Samanis and the FIU students studied the Nandi Sutra weekly.

Samani Satya Pragma and Samani Rohini Pragma designed and proposed a course for upcoming spring semester, 2016 on "Non Violence and Peace Studies" in Department of Religious Studies. The courses is approved and offered in 2017-2018 Fall-Spring semester.

The Clinical Professor of Jain and Sikh Studies at Loyola Marymount University, Dr. Nirinjan Kaur Khalsa and Dr. Pankaj

Jain invited Samani Satya Pragma and Rohini Pragma to give a Skype Lecture for their undergraduate and graduate students on Asceticism of Saman Order, Basics of Jainism and The doctrine of Ahimsa. The students appreciated both the content and delivery of the lecture, and particularly that it was given by a practicing Jain nuns which gave them first hand experience and an in-depth understanding of Jain ascetic practices. Students also had an opportunity to ask their questions. They expressed thanks for the lectures and said it is one that the students are not likely to forget.

Community Outreach

Hindu Temple of Miami coordinator Parul Patel invited Samanis to deliver lecture on "The Power of Concentration and Preksha Meditation".

Tao temple's Master Lee Peng invited Samanis in lectures on Taoism.

Jain Vishva Bharati Houston invited Samani Satya pragma and Samani Rohini Pragma on their Fall 2016 break for the workshop on Santhara: The Art of Dying and Conflict Resolution and Anekantvad.

21st spiritual family camp was organized by Jain Vishva Bharati, Orlando under the spiritual guidance of Samani Bhavit Pragma and Samani Kanchan Pragma during January 15-18, 2017.. Samani Satya Pragma and Samani Rohini Pragma were invited to conduct lectures and activities in the camp.

Jain Vishva Bharti, London conducted a Yoga Retreat under the guidance of Samani Pratibha Pragma on the theme "Transform Yourself". Samani Satya Pragma and Samani Rohini Pragma were invited by JVB London to conduct practical sessions, meetings and lectures on philosophical foundations of Preksha Meditation. There was open discussions regarding Jainism, spirituality and religion. Several sessions of meditation practices and activities were held by Samanis.

