



# JAIN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION

## Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship of Jain Studies

A JERF Newsletter

Issue No. 2 - December, 2011

*A perpetual center of Jain studies was established at Florida International University in April 2010. Since then, many successful Jain Studies programs have been accomplished under this endowed professorship.*

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## First Annual Mahavir Jayanti Lecture at FIU

*“Visions of the Conqueror – Jain Art” by Phyllis Graoff, Yale University.*

Academic celebration of Mahavir Jayanti in FIU campus began by convening “Visions of the Conqueror – Jain Art”, presented by an inquisitive Scholar, Phyllis Graoff, Yale University. The lecture was sponsored by Bhagawan Mahavir Professorship of Jain Studies, Jain Education & Research foundation, Target’s “After Hours” at the Frost Museum.

The night began with a prayer, led by Jain nuns, whose presence has been felt since they began teaching classes six years ago on campus. Nathan Katz, Professor of



Jain Studies and Religious Studies, and who was named the first Bhagawan Mahavir professor, thanked the nuns for their hard work in making Jain studies available to all students.

Phyllis Granoff, one of the worlds’ leading scholars in Indian Religions and professor of World Religions at Yale University and editor of the Journal of Indian Philosophy presented the great epilogue of the Jains, Bhaktamarastotra of

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Manatunga, and an illustrated manuscript of hymns which praised the first Jina Rishabha. She shared the plight of the manuscripts and said, "The illustrations, however, have been removed from the text and sold separately, making their identification difficult."



According to Grandoff, the most interesting thing about the illustrations was

that many artists tried to convey abstract subjects in the concrete world. "It is something every Jain artist attempts to do, not just the manuscript illustrator", she noted.

Jain Education and Research Foundation, also unveiled its first official newsletter at the event with a special Jain dinner. Jains, with their rich history and eye opening art, have a bright forthcoming full of promise.

**Jain Education and Research Foundation presents at Jaina Convention**

The 16th Biennial Jaina 2011 Convention held at the George R Brown Convention Center Downtown Houston from July 1-4, 2011. JERF



team consisting of Sapan and Gitika Bafna, Narendra and Jeevanprabha Mehta, Aditya and Akruhi Pancholi, and Bindesh and Roopal Shah represented JERF and communicated the progress made by JERF at FIU. From JVB centers Houston and New Jersey Samani Bhavit Pragya, Sanmati Pragya, Jayanta

Pragya and Shukla Pragya were also present in the convention. More than 750 Jain families attended the convention and got exposed to the JERF project initiatives.

Pragnesh and Sapana Gandhi set the booth during the convention. JERF booth received visitation by inquiring minds throughout the convention. Young Jains inquired on online course options as well as



senior citizens checked on options to learn Jainism and related courses.

Dr Nathan Katz, Bhagwan Mahavir Professor at FIU, participated in two sessions (an individual session and a panel discussion). His sessions were well received. Mrs. Stephanie Londono, one of the students at FIU, presented the documentary on Jain ethics in Jain Diaspora sessions.

**Undergraduate Certificate Program in Jain Studies at FIU**

*A new milestone in history, The College of Arts and Sciences*

Curriculum Committee has approved Undergraduate Certificate Program in Jain Studies. Several in-class & online courses will be offered to disseminate the Jain education outside Miami in the rest of the United States and other countries.

Below is a list of the courses available-

- Introduction to Jainism
- Jain Art
- Jainism in Modern World
- Selected Jain Texts
- Nonviolence and Social Movements
- Field Work in Jain Study



## FIU Students Community Outreach Program

Students from FIU visited Jain Temple to get a one to one exposure to Jain practice & rituals. About 15 students explored Jain worship & belief firsthand. Here is the insiders' story of what they carried home from this event.

"The idea of Ahimsa (nonviolence) is so strong that Jains also practice strict vegetarianism. I found this devotion to be very interesting, and an inspiring indication of how seriously they take their doctrine," said one of the participant. Matthew Preston was impressed, "I also found the traditional idols to be quite beautiful, and their simplicity making them appears stoic and holy". Stephanie Londono



## Students & Professors Visit India to Explore Jainism

A group of FIU students and professors traveled to India this year to study Jainism, as part of the Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship, held by Professor Nathan Katz (center front). With him are two Jain samanias (nuns) who



have been teaching in Religious Studies: Samani Dr. Chaitanya Pragya and Samani Unnata Pragya. The students include, back from left, students Tal Berman, Kimberly Tucker, Stefan Mahabir, Santana Iglesias and Religious Studies assistant professor Whitney Bauman who visited India to explore Jain philosophy & heritage.

"We can do just so much in the classroom," Katz said, "but to enhance traditional learning with travel and study in a great civilization like India's, can be a life-changing journey for our students and our faculty. On our side, we have welcomed JVBu staff to teach at FIU, and this year we will have JVBu students studying here." (from FIU Online by Deborah O'Neill).

One of the students, Berman, shares, "I have found that most of what can be learned about the world is in the world, not necessarily in books. I can read about a stream, but I will never know a stream without seeing its water effortlessly flowing around its stones... Going through the journey to India, interacting with those practicing Jainism directly, including myself in the practices and



teachings of Jainism, and reflecting on each day spent in India will enhance my understanding of a unique religion held by my fellow citizens of the earth. It is a moral responsibility to seek the perspective of the world through the eyes of many. This is what I hope to achieve by studying Jainism in India." (from FIU Online by Deborah O'Neill).

Assistant professor Whitney Bauman, from religious studies, visited several Jain communities and educational institutions in Delhi, Jaipur, Indore, and Ladnun to explore the Jain doctrine that not only humans and animals, but plants, rivers, and mountains – indeed, all of nature possess life. He saw how the cardinal Jain teaching of non-violence (ahimsa) is applied to nature.

"Jains are small in number," said Dr. Nathan Katz, "but enormous in influence."



says, "I left my shoes out the door and also my purse because it was made out of leather, a material that is prohibited in the Jain religion because it comes from a living being. This was my first encounter with the Jain religion, and this was my first lesson in Ahimsa, or non-violence, toward any living being". Catherine I. Fernandez respects Jain unity in the temple. She adds, "The idea of respect for others could be seen in both the temple setup and the temple's toleration of all sects". Shannon Valdes shares, "I think the religion is rather beautiful, as is the manifestation of the religion in its temples. For the first time ever in visiting a religious place of worship, nothing stroked me in a negative way."

## JVBu Student Visits FIU

Shivani Bothra, a student from Jain Vishva Bharati University, Landun, India, enrolled for her Master program at FIU as a result of the collaborative work between the two Universities. Shivani, a student of Jain Studies having rendered services to different Jain institutes like JVBu, ISJS, & more is looking further her academic experience at FIU.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**The Annual Mahavir Jayanti Lecture**

*Mahavir Jayanti Annual Lecture series organized by Bhagwan Mahavir professorship of Jain Studies:*

Prof John C. Cort, Professor at Denison University will present "Jain Art: Icons and Iconoclasts in Jainism".

John E. Cort has degrees in South Asian Studies from the University of Wisconsin (B.A., 1974; M.A., 1982), and in the Study of religion from Harvard University (A.M., 1984; Ph.D., 1989). John Cort's research focuses on the Jain traditions of South Asia, on which he has conducted extensive fieldwork as well as textual studies.



Prof. Cort has received research grants from the Asian Cultural Council, Getty Foundation, and American Institute of Indian Studies. In addition, he is working on series of essays exploring the roles and expressions of religious devotion within the Jain traditions.

He is also active with several organizations involved with the study of India, religion, and art at the national level. He is Secretary of the Executive Committee of the American Institute of Indian Studies, and on the Board of Trustees of the American Council for Southern Asian Art.

**When:** April 4, 2012, 6PM - 8:30PM

**Topic:** "Jain Art - Icons and Iconoclasts in Jainism with John C. Cort"

**Where:** FIU Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Graham Center Ballroom, FIU, Miami, USA

**Sponsored by:** Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship and Jain Education and Research Foundation

**Contact:** [samanijifu@gmail.com](mailto:samanijifu@gmail.com)

## Experience after the visit to India

*Jain Community of Miami welcomes back the students & Scholars after their life-changing trip to India*



18th September, the event started off with the chanting of Namaskar Mahamantra. This was followed by a welcoming and introductory speech by Sapan Bafna President, JERF. Neptune Srimal convened the program. The guests were Robert Callahan, Prof. Natan Katz, Prof. Larson, Whitney Bauman & the FIU students returned from India. The guests were presented with a traditional shawl & books.

Dr. Whitney Bauman, conveyed his reverence to Acharya Kanaknandanji and Mahendra Muni for sharing their wisdom with him on various aspects of Jaina philosophy. He acknowledged Samani Charitra Pragya, Vice Chancellor JVBU, Ladnun and Prof. N. L. Kachhara from Udaipur, for the warm hospitality and contributing to his understanding. Dr. Bauman put together a stimulating presentation on his India experiences and shared his thoughts on the deconstructionism & Anekant. Students with their dhotis (Indian costume for males) did a wonderful positive power point presentation of their experiences in Ladnun. They highlighted the course content, field trips within India, meetings with Jain families and the extraordinarily beautiful campus of JVBU Ladnun throughout the presentation.

Gabriela Largaespada said, "There aren't enough thank you's in the world to express how thankful I am of my Jain family and also the faculty at FIU. Thank you for all your hard work and also for making this dreams a reality".

She continued, "Special thanks to the Samaniji, who were with me every step of the way and also introduced me to this wonderful way of life and thought. Lots of love to all!" Tal Berman, added, "We had a new perspective of life above all. The campus was very open to education not imposing at all".

He said, "We came to JVBU confused & tired after a long trip in India. JVBU had Preksha Meditation with other classes which helped us to become very relaxed". Stephan enjoyed the religious exposure offered in the field in addition to being in class.

## Preksha Meditation under the guidance of Medical Doctors

Samani Unnata Pragya teaches a course titled, "Meditation & Spiritual Development" at FIU. This course details the Jain Preksha Meditation to the students.



Students get opportunity to meditate in the class, and feel the difference that can make in their lives. Prof. Dollinger and Prof. Heidi checked the pulse rate of Students before and after Preksha meditation practice. Research in Preksha Meditation is looking towards new possibilities.

## Jain Studies at FIU

### New Courses offered in Spring 2011

#### Undergraduate Courses

Prof. Nathan Katz, Samani Dr Chaitanya Pragma and Unnata Pragma developed the following three new undergraduate courses focussed on the studies of Jain scriptures and philosophical texts. Almost 80 students have been enrolled in the courses thus far.

- Religious Classics of Asia
- Intro to Sanskrit Language
- South Asian Culture

Dr Nathan Katz, Professor of Religious Studies at FIU, invited Samani Chaitanya Pragma to co-teach the course "*Religious Classics of Asia*". Samaniji explored the "Concept of Soul and Liberation in Jain and Yoga Tradition". She discussed the concept of spirituality, rebirth and eternality of soul, liberation and meditation on the basis of the canon Acharanga and the philosophical treatises Tattvartha Sutra of Umaswati and Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali. The idea



of God, soul, rebirth etc. found in both the Jain and Yoga traditions are very close to each other.

*South Asian Culture* is a course that brings the cultural heritage of India to light. A course dedicated to the motherland was insightful and enriching for the students. Students enriched their knowledge of India and its rich contribution to the world with its insightful culture.

#### Graduate Courses

Prof. Oren B. Stier and Samani Chaitanya Pragma have developed following two graduate courses.

- Seminar on Sacred Sources
- Sanskrit Language

Under the course "Seminar on Sacred Sources" Samani Chaitanya Pragma discussed "Concept of Violence and Non-violence in Jain Sacred Sources". She delivered lectures on the following topics in the consecutive three seminars:

- Jain Canons and Hermeneutical Tradition
- Violence and its Effect in Jain Scriptures
- Non-violence: Philosophy and Practice

The seminars covered the concept of equality of all souls, its environmental and ecological implications, interdependence of natural resources and the dreadful results of violence which is the direct or indirect root cause of human suffering and global problems.

Students had an opportunity to read the original canons like *Acharanga*, *Prashnavyakarana*, *Upasakadasha*, *Dasaviakalika* and the philosophical treatise *Tattvarth Sutra*.

### New Courses offered in Fall 2011

#### Introduction to Jainism

A full course on Jainism, its special philosophy & its subtle details of the concept of reality, & natural ethical principles reverberated the minds of Students.

#### The first online course with Jain philosophy infused

*Healing in Asian Religions*, is a course with details of Indian healing modalities. Students were exposed to the healthy life style of Jain Ascetics, the concept of Karma and health. The course infused with Jain content is yet another step to rendering an opportunity to explore Jainism in the context of healing.

#### Study of Sanskrit Language at FIU

The interest and curiosity among the foreign students to know Indian culture through Sanskrit language is on the rise. Looking at the great interest from the students FIU has started two courses on Sanskrit language at undergraduate level and graduate level. The responsibility to conduct the Sanskrit language classes at both the levels is given to Samani Chaitanya Prajna. Students are not only curious to learn Sanskrit language but also interested to contribute in this field.



## JERF Activities

### “Jain History and Culture” for YJA

Young Jains of America organizes lectures for youth all over America. Arpit Mehta, the Education Director of YJA, organized a Jain lecture of Samani Chaitanya Pragya through video conferencing getting access to more than 40 young Jains. The American born Jains were excited to listen about their religion. Further they enjoyed the

### FIU remembers 9/11

FIU organized a series of weeklong events to pay tribute to the nearly 3,000 people who lost their lives in the 9/11 terrorist attacks 10 years ago. A ceremony where in people from diverse faiths enchanted the prayers and expressed their feelings to this incident.

Samani Unnata Pragya chanted the highest mantra of the Jains,



opportunity of seeking answers directly from Samaniji. The YJA is looking forward to the next session in the near future.

Namaskar Mahamantra. She further conveyed the message of forgiveness rather than holding to the past history.

### Announcing Latika & Rajiv Jain Fellowship in Jain Studies at Florida International University

Candidates are sought for a two-year graduate fellowship to be awarded to a highly qualified and motivated student in Religious Studies with a concentration in Jain Studies.

Candidates should have a B.A. (all fields will be considered), an undergraduate GPA higher than 3.5, and meet university requirements for admission.

The fellowship will cover tuition, fees and stipend for two academic years and the intervening summer. Study or research in India is possible. It is expected that the holder of this fellowship will pursue an M.A. thesis in Jain studies.

### Guest Lecture in University of North Texas

Samani Chaitanya Pragya & Samani Unnata Pragya delivered two guest lectures at the University of North Texas.

Prof. Pankaj Jain, an assistant professor from the University of North Texas invited Samaniji for guest lectures in his class. The students exploring Jainism received an opportunity to understand and explore the Samani Initiation, a new monk hood in Jainism. The Saman & samani initiation being a new & innovative endeavor of His Holiness Acharya Tulsi was brought to light. What it means to live in America as a Nun, was their prime interest. Further Samani Chaitanya Pragya also delivered a lecture on Anekant, one of the most important philosophical concepts of



Jainism, which was followed by a small session of meditation. The students are keen in exploring more through these lectures delivered by Samaniji.

### Lectures in South Florida Jain Center, Miami, USA

Samani Chaitanya Pragya and Unnata Prajna were invited by the organizers of SFJC to deliver lectures on “Jain Life Style in



Modern times”, “Worship as Understanding of Mahavir” February 22nd and March 3rd 2011 respectively. They said that to develop mutual understanding and respect has become a great need in the present age of globalization and interculturality. In the lecture on birth anniversary of Lord

### Lectures in South Florida Hindu Temple, Miami, USA

On March 27, 2011 Samani Chaitanya and Unnata Prajna were invited by the organizers of SFHT to deliver a lecture on “Concept of Liberation”. She said that the concepts of soul and liberation are the core of the heart of spirituality. Liberation is the pure and perfect state of soul. To achieve this state

is the highest goal of life in Indian culture in general and Jain culture in particular. In order to achieve that goal we need an integrated and holistic approach. Such approach as suggested by Jain Tirthankras is called Triratna, consisting of enlightened worldview, enlightened knowledge and enlightened conduct which collectively can help to realize the goal. Any one of these, devoid of the other two, is insufficient to serve the purpose of life. It is universal truth that every person has to pay for his deeds. Each action affects one who acts. Only the person who has no self-interest can remain unaffected by the action.

### Guest Lectures at FIU

Samani delivered guest lecture in various classes with diverse concepts and aspects of Jainism. Lectures delivered were related to Modern Jainism, Jain origin, Jain philosophy of Nonviolence.

## JERF Activities (contd...)

### Lectures in West Palm Beach, Florida, USA

Samani Dr Chaitanya Pragma and Unnata Prajna were invited to deliver a lecture on "Philosophy behind Tolerance" and "Philosophy of Action" by the Jain community of West Palm Beach on February 25th and March 18th, 2011.

She spoke that there are certain situations in which there is no solution to the problems other than tolerance. Especially something which is pre-destined and determinate or in other words, when de-meritorious karmas come into fruition then one has no other option than tolerance. If one keeps patience and balance in the conflicting situation then it becomes easy to overcome the

### Lecture in International Summer School for Jain Studies

Dr Samani Chaitanya Prajna was invited by Dr. Shugan Chand Jain to deliver lectures on "Concept of Reality and Six Substance" on 1st and 2nd of June 2011 in Apabhhransa Academy, Jaipur.

The professors and students from several countries were present in the lecture. She discussed multi faceted nature of reality and dealt with the peculiarities of six substances.

The queries regarding the concept of soul from physiological and religious points of view came up and the answers given were enjoyed by the delegates.

### Lecture on "Liberation of Lord Mahavir and Diwali" in Jain Temple of Miami

Jain center of South Florida celebrated Mahavir Nirvan on 30th of Oct. People with their colorful Indian garb flocked to the temple. The ceremony started with the mantra chanting of Bhagawan Mahavir swami. Samani Chaitanya Pragma delivered a heart



touching lecture about Mahavir, his principles in practice in the ancient time & the need of it today. Mumukshu Sheetal educated the kids with the significance of Diwali. The ceremony followed by kids lighting the lamps and auspicious mantras.

### Preksha Meditation Course for Community

Preksha Meditation, an ancient heritage of the Jains means perceive the now without likes & dislikes. Samaniji guided through the Preksha



Meditation primary course to the Miami community. More than 40 participants ranged from doctors, business people to students & house wives. The whole endeavor incorporated theory & practical sessions dealing

with what is preksha meditation to how to do proper breathing.

The session started with the most captivating Preksha song sung by Samani Punya Pragyaji. The first 10 minutes every participant vibrated with

the depth of the song, whether or not one is familiar with the language & words.

Samani Chaitanya Pragma guided every participant through the "Preksha Initiation Ceremony".

Sessions were geared towards one of the important components or subsidiary component of Preksha Meditation like Asanas, Pranayam, Mantra, Mudra, Relaxation, & breathing perception. The six days, six week program rendered an opportunity to dive to the deeper meaning & principles of Preksha, helped them release the stress & feel the moment of now, further it was a moment of realizing the Jain technique of Meditation through experience. Each session, the participants received the blessed Spiritual cards, a take reminder of Meditation in daily life.

### Vacancy Announcement : Bhagwan Mahavir Professor of Jain Studies

FIU is a multi-campus public research university located in Miami, a vibrant, international city. FIU offers more than 180 baccalaureate, masters, professional, and doctoral degree programs to over 46,000 students.

The Department of Religious Studies is pleased to announce an open rank search for the Bhagwan Mahavir Professor of Jain Studies. Candidates must hold a Ph.D. in Religious Studies or other appropriate field with a demonstrable record of teaching excellence at the college or university level as well as be able to mentor graduate students. Candidates must be proficient in English and have knowledge of at least one language of India, and have published works on Jainism and other religions of India, pursue a substantial research agenda, and should have significant field experience in India. The professor will teach a range of courses about the religions of India in general and Jainism in particular, and background in the field of religious studies and knowledge of world religions is desirable. The professor will work closely with the Jain Educational and Research Foundation, and will organize lectures and symposia. She or he will also oversee and develop exchange programs in India, including summer study programs and tours. The department, with nine full time members, offers B.A. and M.A. degrees and is located within FIU's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

Applications should be made online at <https://www.fiujobs.org>. Look for Open Rank Professor: Jainism, under the Religious Studies Department. Attach letter of application, CV, and writing sample to online application. The writing sample can be either a published article or a thesis chapter. In addition, send three letters of reference, transcripts and course syllabi to Professor Andrea Seidel, Bhagwan Mahavir Search Committee Chair, DM 320C, Florida International University, Miami, Florida 33199. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled; review of applications will begin 12/31. Send inquiries to: [seidela@fiu.edu](mailto:seidela@fiu.edu).

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Parmar Ramesh & Suba, NJ  
Patel Jayantilal V. & Sudha, OH  
Perikh Bina ( Vidya Vihar), FL  
Ramesh Rekha, FL  
Sacheti Sandeep & Madhumita, NJ  
Sal Praschnik Inc., FL  
Sancheti Suraj & Jyotsna, AL  
Sanghvi Manoj & Urvashi, FL  
Sethy Vimala H., MI  
Shah Ashok & Premlata, FL  
Shah Bhavana, FL  
Shah Bindesh & Roopal, FL  
Shah Bipin & Rekha, CA  
Shah Dilip & Darshna, FL  
Shah Guni, AL  
Shah Hemendra M. & Unita, KY  
Shah Kamlesh & Avani, FL  
Shah Kirit & Harshida, FL  
Shah Kirit R., FL  
Shah Kunal, FL  
Shah Mehul & Anita, FL  
Shah Naresh K & Indira, WV  
Shah Nayan & Harsha, FL  
Shah Neeral, AL  
Shah Rajen & Beena, AL  
Shah Rajni, AL  
Shah Satish & Geeta, FL  
Shah Tushar, FL  
Shah Vasant & Mona, FL  
Sipani Dhanraj, GA  
Srimal Neptune & Sangeeta, FL  
Surana Ajay, GA  
Surana Manohar Singh & Prabha, VA  
Surana Prakash & Lata, FL  
Surana Vikas & Deep, FL  
Talati Dipak & Siddhi, FL  
Thakker Hemant & Taru, FL  
Tolia Kishore, FL  
Tolia Mihir, FL  
Vakharia Vijay & Daksha, FL



JERF Newsletter is a publication of the Jain Education and Research Foundation, 17397 SW 36th St Miramar, FL 33029. Contact us at (786) 546-2637 or [info@jaineducation.org](mailto:info@jaineducation.org).  
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