

JVB LONDON GYANSHALA

Spiritual classes for 4-14 year olds
Every Sunday, 10.30-11.30am



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A MESSAGE FROM H. H. ACHARYASHRI MAHAPRAGYA

Malevolence and depravity are smothering the world. There is an abundance of ways to damage moral values. With pragmatism, consumption is also growing rapidly. Under these conditions, Gyanshala has a compelling function.

Our brain has two components. The left hemisphere is responsible for the growth of common sense, knowledge and intelligence. The right hemisphere works for the development of spirituality.

Sadhus, Sadhvis, Samanis and other instructors have a special responsibility to see how to teach at the Gyanshala. A professor can teach college students but teaching five-year-old children is challenging.

A Gyanshala should:

1. Be scientific and progressive
2. Use a spiritual as well as a psychological approach
3. Emphasise behavioural training along with conceptual training.

Gyanshala is not just a concept - it is the science of living.

Our Mission

With the blessings of H.H Acharyashri Mahapragya and under the guidance of Samanijis, JVB London Gyanshala for children opened its doors in 2004 with the opening of JVB Centre itself and has been educating children since then. However, last year in June 2008 JVB Gyanshala introduced a more structured curriculum and systematic approach aligned with its goals.

JVB London Gyanshala strives to impart to its students, life skills for physical, mental and emotional health, a stress free and peaceful life, and spiritual bliss. It also strives to inculcate life values in children that help them to grow into responsible adults, who respect their fellow beings, who care for their environment, who tolerate other religious beliefs and who have empathy for those who are less fortunate.

Curriculum

Children ages from 4 to 14 are placed in three groups: Kinder Gyan Group, Gyan Group and Darshan group. Classes are conducted by Samanijis and young teachers. Classes are from 10.30-11.30am every Sunday and each class is divided into the three categories:

- Science of Living (Yoga and Meditation) –approx 20 Min.
- Learning Jainism – approx 20 Min.
- Understanding Jainism – approx 20 Min.



The curriculum covers topics such as Jain History, Jain Philosophy, Jain *Mantras*, *Shlokas*, Jain Prayers & Rituals, Jain Festivals & Pilgrimages, *Preksha* Yoga & Meditation. From 2009, a three-year course book that contains all study material is being provided to all students.

Students will remain in the same group for duration of three years. All students have to go through a written and practical examination in March and it is only after completing all three years that the students will progress from one group to the next. At the end of each academic year certificates will be awarded to students based on their examination results and yearly attendance.

Students' Experience

"I enjoy Gyanshala classes because we get to learn about Jainism and get blessings from Samanijis. I also enjoy doing yoga during class because it helps me focus and it is good exercise for the body. Gyanshala has allowed me to make good friends in both Gyan and Darshan groups." (Tanvi, Gyan group, aged 7)

"I enjoy going to Gyanshala classes as it has allowed me to meet new Jain friends. I also feel good as I get blessings every week from Samanijis. I have enjoyed learning about the main Jain festivals and differences between them e.g. how Das Lakshana is celebrated differently to the Paryushan. In addition, how different actions can take us into different gatis. It makes me think about what I do daily and whether my actions are good or bad. During Paryushan, I found that the worksheet was fun and challenging. I did many Navkar malas, Navkarsi, Pratikraman. This also gave me and my brother the opportunity to fast by doing ekasanas and gain many points as a result." (Kevallee, Darshan group, aged 9)

"I have learnt a lot of things about Jainism, like Tirthankars, Logassa and Jain A-Z. The yoga postures help my mind and body to relax. I get to know and make friends with other Jain children." (Devendra, Gyan group, aged 7)

"Gyanshala is a mini-school for children who are willing to learn more about Jainism (including yoga). I always look forward to going there and each time, it is enjoyable and fun. The lessons are very educational and at the same time interesting. I particularly enjoy doing yoga and other practical activities however all activities prove to be great fun. I have learnt several things including Jain philosophy and Jain practices. Gyanshala has always proved to be informative, relaxing and enjoyable at the same time." (Sneha Jain, Darshan group, aged 13)

A word from a Youth Teacher

"We feel privileged that the Samanijis have given us the opportunity to promote and enhance the learning and teaching of Jain philosophy and religion amongst young children. With Samanijis' blessings, this also allows us to elaborate our knowledge and stay connected with them. Teaching the children is a very fulfilling experience and seeing the children enjoying themselves, particularly during the laughing yoga exercise most definitely puts a smile on our faces every Sunday." (Darshna Shah)

What the parents say...

"Gyanshala is an excellent, accelerated moral, educational, cultural and spiritual programme for the children. It caters for various age groups and is imparted by "professionals" and dedicated volunteers in a very encouraging manner. Immense gratitude goes to the Trustees for providing a free spiritual and educational experience to children." (Rajeev Shah)



"When I see all the children coming out of the Sunday Gyanshala classes, their smiling, relaxed faces show that they have had a wonderful time. Through Yoga, they have learnt positively how to deal with stress and how to look after their bodies. Learning about Jainism gives them a framework for distinguishing right from wrong and thus helps them in making the right decision in their everyday life. Spending only one hour a week at Gyan-shala every Sunday has such a positive effect on the children for the rest of their week and I would recommend parent take advantage of this wonderful opportunity we have here at Sayer Centre." (Veena Shah)

"Living abroad, miles away from our motherland, following a religion which is very scarce, it is extremely important and difficult to inculcate religious and spiritual knowledge to the next generation. Gyanshala has been instrumental in bridging this gap very effectively for us." (Rajesh Jain)