

JUNE 2020

# YOUNG MINDS IGNITE

A YOUNG JAINS OF AMERICA PUBLICATION



णमो अरिहंताणं  
 Namō Arihantāṇaṃ  
 I bow to the Arihants, destroyers of their inner enemies.

णमो सिद्धाणं  
 Namō Siddhāṇaṃ  
 I bow to the Siddhas, the liberated souls.

णमो आयरियाणं  
 Namō Āyariyāṇaṃ  
 I bow to the Acharyas, the religious leaders.

णमो उवज्झायाणं  
 Namō Uvajjhāyāṇaṃ  
 I bow to the Upadhyays, the religious teachers.

णमो लोए सव्व-साहूणं  
 Namō Lōē Savva Sāhūṇaṃ  
 I bow to all the Sadhus and Sadhvis, those who have renounced the worldly life and follow a path of simplicity.

एसो पंच-णमोक्कारो, सव्व-पाव-प्पणासणो  
 Ēsōpañchaṇamōkkārō, Savvapāvappaṇāsaṇō  
 This five-fold bow (mantra) destroys all sins and obstacles,

मंगला णं च सव्वेसिं, पढमं हवई मंगलं ।।१।।  
 Maṅgalā Ṇaṃ Ca Savvēsiṃ, Paḍamama Havaī Maṅgalaṃ  
 and of all auspicious mantras, is the first and foremost one.



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

[7:58am CET - Thursday, March 12, 2020]



“Hi Satej, sorry to wake you up early. Your study abroad program has officially been canceled, and we’ve already booked you a flight to come home tomorrow morning.”

--

Right after the January release of *Young Minds: Vision*, I was on my way to Vienna, Austria, for my semester-long study abroad program, planning on joining my fellow 2020 YJA Convention Committee members at the May Board Meeting, taking advantage of a summer internship in the Big Apple that I had worked immensely hard to secure, and “Progressing with Purpose” in Dallas, this July. As you know, the circumstances have definitely changed and unfortunately, all of those plans have been either altered or canceled.

While adjusting to a new lifestyle, I have realized that YJA is one of the few things that has remained constant. Whether I was problem-solving on the [Networking Database](#) with the College Chapters team, working with fellow board members on the [Navigating College Webinar](#), listening to the latest release of [Aneka](#), or tuning into Kunal Parikh and Umang Patel’s virtual session on [A Jain Perspective on Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#), our community has truly been there for me during this unusual and uncertain time. While producing this release of Young Minds: Ignite, I have collaborated with 62 different people, and I am very grateful for YJA to have given me a platform to do so.

In this release, you will read about YJA during its early years, the Young Jains of Singapore, how YJA’s Local Representatives and Subcommittee members are contributing to the future of Jainism in North America, current events surrounding the Black community, and much more. This issue would not have been possible without the ambitious writers, creative designers, dependable reviewers, and the Publications Subcommittee - thank you for all your hard work.

To me, Young Minds’ value is not its brand as “YJA’s flagship magazine,” but its ability to empower people to share their thoughts and opinions while increasing accessibility to YJA’s resources. If you are interested in writing for Young Minds or want to share your story on our platform, please do not hesitate to reach out at [publications@yja.org](mailto:publications@yja.org)! On behalf of the 2019-2020 Executive Board, I sincerely thank you for always supporting our projects, initiatives, and events.

With #yjalove,  
Satej Shah

Director of Publications, 2019-2020



## A Letter From The Co-Chairs

It is difficult to begin this letter without thinking about where we are right now and where YJA could have been eight months into our term. While writing this letter from the comfort of our homes, we have spent the last few weeks on countless Google Meet and Zoom calls, planning virtual sessions, negotiating event cancellations, and enjoying the company of our friends and family online because we are unable to meet physically.

We started 2020 with hope and excitement as we were looking forward to the winter retreats, the 2020 YJA Convention, and numerous other local and regional events & initiatives on the horizon. After having the official Convention Committee meeting in Dallas during the last weekend of January, we quickly shifted focus to hosting the biggest retreat in YJA history at the Mid-Atlantic Poconos retreat - one of YJA's annual traditions. Next was the turn of the #MidBest and Northeast retreats to show their warm hospitality. But before we could pack our bags for Texas or California for the South and West retreats respectively, our plans had to change due to the quickly developing COVID-19 situation, and we're sure you all are aware of how the world has been dealing with this unprecedented situation since.

It's in these trying times of the pandemic, however, that the strength, perseverance, and togetherness of our community have come to the forefront. Through the relentless hard work of our Executive Board, Convention Committee, Local Representatives, Subcommittee members, and Project Teams, we launched and hosted a multitude of initiatives and campaigns. We have showcased our community through [Humans of YJA](#), educated kids through [Younger Minds](#), celebrated [International Women's Day](#) and [2020 graduations](#), empathized with the Black community by reflecting on our own values, hosted thought-provoking sessions on spiritual journeys, entrepreneurship, and [systemic racism](#), and provided dance and workout [lessons](#), all the while making sure that we are continuing to leave a lasting impact on the Jain youth across North America. We are thankful to each and every member of this community who has helped us make these recent successes possible. And, we are not done just yet - keep following our social media or subscribe to our newsletter to stay in the know of some even more exciting things that we have planned in the coming weeks, including our first-ever virtual YJA Day!

As we look back on the last few months, we realize how much our organization has grown despite the circumstances. We are forever grateful to the Executive Board and Convention Committee, who have weathered the storm with resilience and passion, and helped make sure that we are able to carry out our responsibilities dutifully, providing the necessary resources, education, and entertainment to all of YJA's members. We'd like to give a special shout-out to YJA's [Board of Trustees](#), [Naishadh Shah](#), [Chintan Shah](#), [Dipak Doshi](#), and [Seema Jain](#), who have helped us tremendously as we worked to shift gears from physical events to our various online initiatives. Without their constant guidance and support, we would not be able to get to where we are today. Lastly, we salute and give a heartfelt thank you to every single essential worker who is risking their health and safety to help others.

In return, we as Co-Chairs have had the opportunity to grow, as well. Through every obstacle that has come our way, every person that we have had the chance to work with during the course, every idea that we have helped turn into a reality, and every tough decision that we have had to make, we have grown as leaders and as human beings. We have learned how to anticipate, navigate, and communicate by listening, learning, and leading effectively. And as a result, we have tried to steer this organization in a direction that aligns, not only with our vision but also with the mission of YJA.

The theme for this Young Minds issue is "Ignite." This word can elicit different reactions to each reader depending on the situation. Whether the last few weeks of living in quarantine have sparked a wave of curiosity in you, kindled your inner spirit to reflect on our lives and surroundings, or simply fueled your desire to learn about the Black Lives Matter movement, we hope you find something in this edition that inspires you.

Here's hoping that this amazing issue finds you in good health and that you enjoy reading it as much as we did. We are looking forward to seeing you very soon but until then, please stay safe and take care of one another.

With #yjalove,  
Parshva Vakharia and Vatsal Gandhi  
Co-Chairs, 2019-2020



Jai Jinendra!

Welcome to the Education Corner, which hosts thought-provoking articles, educational resources and platforms, and reminders about upcoming holidays and projects. Please feel free to send a message (or two!) to [education@yja.org](mailto:education@yja.org) if you have any questions, comments, or feedback!

If anything in this content has offended you or gone against the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir, we sincerely ask for forgiveness. Micchami Dukkadam!

Maharaj Saheb Messages is a Q&A platform aimed at building a bridge between Sadhus and Sadhvis and Jain youth via written correspondence.

Through the clarity provided by Maharaj Sahebs, we hope young Jains will be able to reignite their faith. Check out one of the messages submitted by our members and the response from Acharya Akshay Vijayji Maharaj Saheb!

## YOUNGER MINDS

Younger Minds, an all-new quarterly publication meant for budding young Jains across the country, was launched earlier this year with its first release! Intended for the 5-13 year-old age group, this quick read features relatable philosophy lessons, stories, games/activities, and more.

The idea for this magazine came from the *Time for Kids!* and *Highlights* magazine the team was always excited to receive and read. The team's hope is that children, whether reading alone or with a parent, develop a connection with Jainism and a love for learning at a younger age.



## MAHARAJ SAHEB MESSAGES

Do we use Karma as an explanation for our situations or as an excuse? Are we always bound to our Karmas?

We use karma as an explanation... so that one doesn't get into negative thoughts...

We must always think of positive acts... the same. Even if we fail, our efforts help us achieve 'nirjara (eradication of karma)' and the uppersaid thought avoids 'aartadhyam (grudges)'.

We are not always bound to our karmas. If our efforts are stronger than obstructing karmas... our act becomes fruitful...

Suppose one is experiencing karmas relating to ill health... if karmas are very strong then even taking multiple prescriptions won't help.



## META FOUR

Authored By:  
Umang Lathia, Rishi  
Zaveri, Sakhi Shah, and  
Suryaraj Jain

The idea of FourSquare comes from *The Kingmaker*, a Hindi-English quarterly magazine released by the Shree Ratnatrayee Trust under the guidance of Acharya Maharaj Sahebs in India. We hope it succeeds in providing different perspectives within unifying themes.

Please visit [yja.org/msm](http://yja.org/msm) and click on the tab next to "Q & A" in order to access previously published issues of The Kingmaker. A special thanks to Rishi Zaveri for compiling this resource!

### Fire - Burning Away Your Kashay

While often seen as a damaging force, fire can also be considered a purifying force. Natural forest fires are one example, although they are perceived as solely harmful. They are known to be ecologically beneficial as they burn away invasive plant species and clear the ground for new growth. Forests are reborn in the aftermath of the fires, and native species are allowed to thrive again.

Similarly, we must light a forest fire within ourselves to burn away our inner enemies - our Kashays. These Kashays (anger, ego, deceit, and greed) are akin to invasive species, which prevent our intrinsic, native qualities from thriving. By burning them away, we make space for our innate qualities to grow and bloom. The less Kashays we have cluttering our minds, the more opportunity there is for virtues to take root and grow. In this way, anger gives way to compassion, greed to contentment, deceit to honesty, and ego to humility.

Now is the time to light the spark that will create this purifying fire. Analyze your life and find which Kashay has the strongest hold on you: perhaps it is ego about your intelligence, greed for the latest technology, anger at those who do not share your views or being deceptive to get what you want. Try to cultivate and implement the opposite qualities the next time such a scenario appears: humility when being praised, satisfaction with what you have, forgiveness for your offender, and openness of intent. Do this, and over time, you will see your Kashays progressively burn away.

### Lightning - Finding Your Ground

Lightning often symbolizes destruction and mystery. It is typically associated with fear. However, lightning also symbolizes the ability to stay grounded.

When we see lightning strike, we often only observe the bolt that hits the ground. What we don't see, however, are the different branches of the bolt that do not make it past the clouds.

This can relate to our journeys throughout life, where we are often presented with different distractions and paths. Each one takes us on a different route, but ultimately, it is important for us to maintain our priorities and remain "grounded" as we branch out. It is easy for our judgment to become obscure and clouded in a materialistic world, but it is essential to keep our priorities and values in mind so we do not lose sight of our identities - our souls.

To do this, we can incorporate meditation, self-introspection, and acts of service into our ways of life. For example, finding ways to volunteer and help those in need is a great way to be cognizant of our privileges, be thankful for all that we are given and give back to the community. This way, we do not branch away from our values, but instead, find our straightforward path to the ground.

### Candle - True Knowledge

Candles illuminate a space with their bright flames. Before the modern incandescent bulb, candles were the primary source of light. Without that light source, one would be lost in the darkness, unable to recognize their surroundings.

Imagine a sealed room that has been in darkness for years and years. One small candle is sufficient to light the entire room and repel the darkness. Similarly, the knowledge provided by the Arihants can expel, not only years but lifetimes of darkness from our souls.

Similar to how a candle eliminates darkness, lessons learned from those with complete knowledge dispels our inner ignorance. In Jainism, these wise figures are Tirthankars, liberated souls who reinstated the Jain religion during their lifetimes and guided others on the path to Moksha (liberation). Mahavir Swami was the last Tirthankar to attain Moksha. As one works towards spiritual progress by following the teachings of Tirthankars, incorrect or impure thoughts begin to decrease.

Just as it is possible to light one candle with another, we must seek out those who have lit the candle of knowledge within themselves. Although we do not have direct access to Tirthankars anymore, we have access to their teachings and to those who have incorporated these teachings into their lives. We should all make the effort to learn from these masters, and brighten our future.

### Firework - Every Soul's Potential

Fireworks all have the potential to create beautiful designs in the sky. However, only some get to soar into the sky - what separates these fireworks from the rest? A dormant firework needs an initial spark, of course! Once lit, it can rise into the sky and achieve its full capabilities.

Our soul also aims to rise above its worldly existence and achieve its unique beauty of purity and calmness. Each and every single soul has this potential to reach Moksha. However, what we need to kickstart our journey is a spark, the same as a firework. In the case of our spiritual journey, this spark is often a guru or teacher, or a learning or realization that sets us on the right path.

In the case of Gautam Swami, this spark was Mahavir Swami's visit to his town. Before, Gautam Swami (then named Indrabhuti) was doubtful of the soul's existence. He angrily went to debate this with the Tirthankar, but upon hearing Mahavir Swami's response, he began to reflect on the nature of the self. He then took Diksha, renouncing his worldly life to become a disciple of Mahavir Swami, and eventually achieved Moksha. The spark from the exchange had catalyzed Gautam Swami's journey towards achieving his soul's full potential.

Similarly, we should never doubt the potential of our soul to achieve Moksha; rather, we must keep searching for the spark to ignite our desires to attain the same bliss.



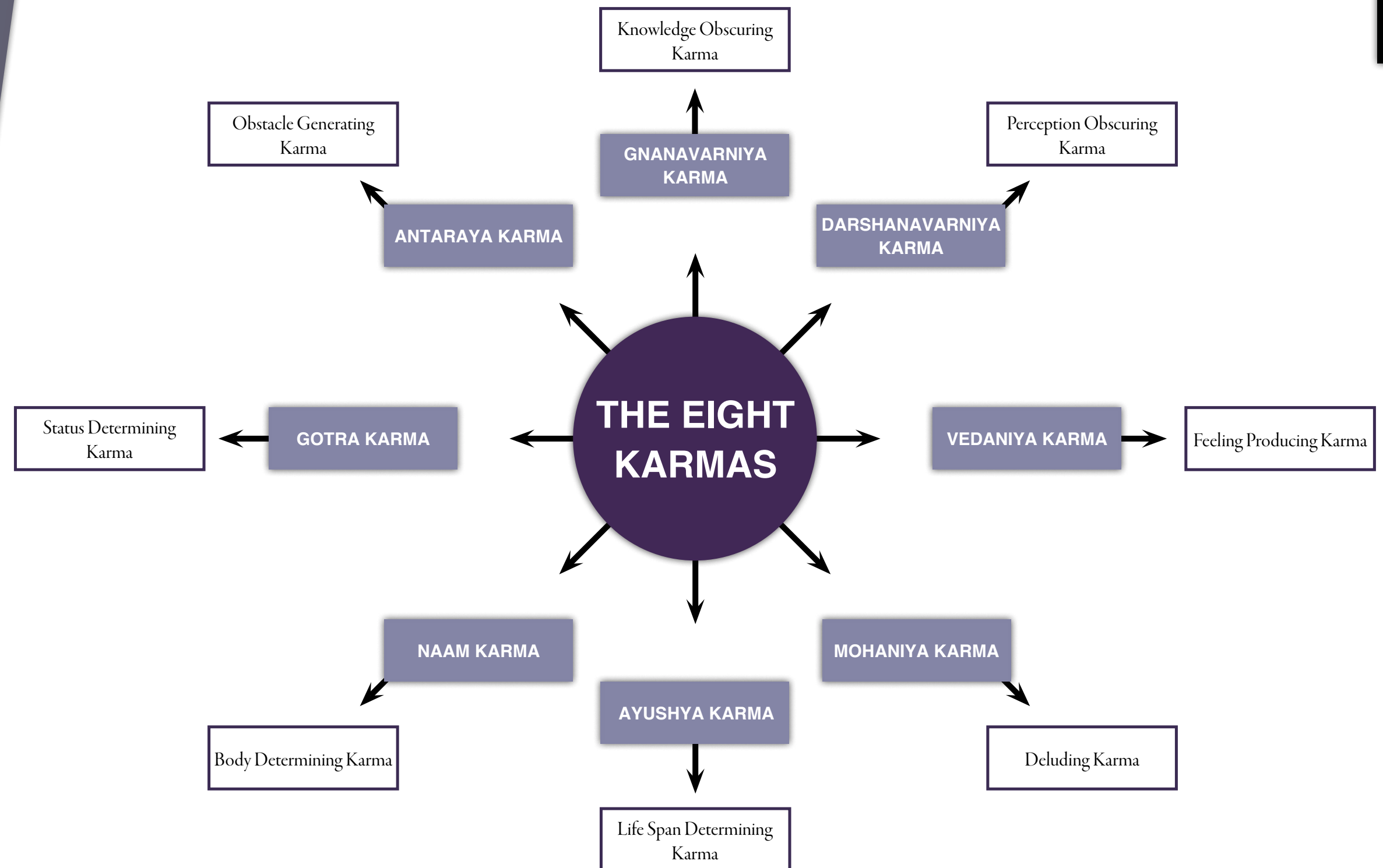
## Jainism 101: Karma Thoery

The third in a series of informational videos about Jainism, this video explores the karma theory. Watch it to get a deeper understanding of the importance of the eight karmas.

To watch all Jainism 101 videos, please visit YJA's YouTube channel.



@youngjainsofamerica







# YOUNG JAINS OF SINGAPORE HIGHLIGHT

BY: JAENI SHAH, JUHI SHAH, SHAILY SHAH

The Young Jains of Singapore, (YJS), is the youth arm of the Singapore Jain Religious Society (SJRS). Made up of Jains from the ages of 13-25, YJS has the vision to encourage youth to step out of their comfort zone and work together as one while building upon and cultivating the virtues and lessons of Jainism in our daily lives and routines. Some of our recent events included our annual Diwali Party, contribution

to Shibir 2019, and helping with the SJRS Walk. These would not have been possible without the commitment and energy of our YJS members and has helped us tremendously to become a bigger part of our Jain community.

We asked some of our YJS members about their practices, and how they felt towards the society as a whole. Here is what Anish Gathani, (15) had to say:

"I do not really practice Jainism daily, but I watch my parents and grandparents do Aarti every day. I subconsciously keep Jain principles like Ahimsa in mind before going about my actions. I also try not to harm other living beings and people in any way." YJS seeks not to have our members follow proper rituals for the sake of it but rather build upon the true essence of Jainism, as conveyed by Anish.



He also expressed his sense of belonging in the organization, as it's a platform for him to socialize with people around his age from similar backgrounds. He believes that many discussions and conversations held by the SJRS and YJS expose him to a different point of view. It also has given him a place to learn about various opinions on religion and spirituality. It is important, especially in Singapore, to hold onto and understand one's own identity to be able to represent it in the multi-cultural society of ours.

Kushal Shah (16), on the other hand, is an incredible example of how doing rituals with the correct intentions can help one on their inner journey. He tries his best to go to the Derasar at least once a day by either doing Puja in the morning or Aarti and Darshan in the evening.

**He believes that it is important to visit the Derasar at least once a day because it is a peaceful place for him.**

His mind calms down, and he is provided with internal happiness at the Derasar. He also tries to read books related to Jainism, such as Jain stories or Sutras, which help him stay connected with Jainism and directs him on the right path by teaching him the



right values and by building faith in our religion. He strongly believes that these two practices - visiting the Derasar and reading Jain books - are simple but necessary for one to achieve internal peace.

Kushal also enjoys regularly attending YJS and SJRS events. The Jain Sangh feels like the family that he can celebrate both festivals and moments of happiness with. He believes that the Jain Sangh is his family who always celebrates festivals together and shares happiness together, too. He enjoys taking part in the Values-in-Action community service projects that YJS and SJRS regularly host. He recounted fond memories of various service events, such as beach cleaning to promote cleanliness in Singapore. He also enjoys social events with his fellow Jain brothers and sisters, like bubble soccer, laser tag, and movie nights!

YJS and SJRS regularly try to find novel and innovative ways to help young Jains share their passion for Jainism and find their identity in our community, whether it's through a Garba practice for Shibir or the yearly youth session with Gurujis.



### YJA Restaurants

Are you looking for Jain-friendly, vegetarian or vegan food options at a nearby restaurant? YJA Restaurants has got you covered!

One of the primary ways Jains integrate the practice of Ahimsa, or non-violence, into their daily lives is through their diets. Recently, cultural awareness and plant-based diet trends have led to an expansion of vegetarianism and a thriving vegan community worldwide. YJA Restaurants wants to make the Jain diet more accessible outside of your home kitchen through its ever-expanding database.

Looking ahead, the team plans to implement a user-friendly, customized map to find restaurants based on a specific location. Please feel free to suggest additional restaurants and share [yja.org/restaurants](https://yja.org/restaurants)!



Looking to get involved in this or other YJA Projects and Initiatives? Email [projects@yja.org](mailto:projects@yja.org) to find out how you can contribute.



### Jain Mentorship Program

Whether you are moving away from home for the first time or starting a new job, finding mentors can be difficult. There is a large untapped pool of Jain professionals across North America that are interested in helping young Jains grow.

The revived Jain Mentorship Program (JMP) focuses on strengthening bonds within the community by encouraging Jains across North America to connect through mentorship. The JMP team will be pairing mentors with mentees this summer, with a focus on social, personal, professional, and spiritual development. If you have any questions or want to get involved, please contact [jainmentorship@gmail.com](mailto:jainmentorship@gmail.com)!

### Jain Mathematics Tournament

Calling all math enthusiasts!

Jain scriptures have a deep root in mathematics, going as far as describing distinct infinities - a concept that wasn't discovered until the 19th century in Europe. YJA would like to emphasize the role of science and mathematics by introducing The Jain Mathematics Tournament!



"If this soul can start at any point along the base of the lowest hell, what is the maximum possible distance the soul can travel to its destination (center of middle region) making exactly two turns?"

YJA encourages youth to recall their math and problem-solving skills for this week-long challenge on Jain topics. A special shoutout goes to the JMT Season 1 winner: Zachary George and the JMT Season 2 winner: Vineet Shah. Check out the most recent problems and solutions at [yja.org/jmt](https://yja.org/jmt)!

### Humans of YJA

Humans of YJA is inspired by Humans of New York, a photoblog composed of stories from different people all around the city and the world. YJA's initiative aims to positively use social media to share experiences of the Jain youth.

The first story shared how Kunal Parikh was inspired to define his life's purpose through a conversation with a Maharajsaheb. The second highlight, Harsha Nahata, explained how Anekantavada played a role on her path towards Journalism. And most recently, Karishma Shah spoke about her encounter with racism and how the experience inspired her to stand up for what she believed in. Check out the full stories of these Humans of YJA at [yja.org/humans](https://yja.org/humans)!







# REFLECTIONS ON JAINISM IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

I have found it extraordinarily difficult to articulate what living through a pandemic has felt like. On some days, it feels like the warmth of the plastic pool chair against my back on a Saturday in July, of having nowhere to go or be but feeling completely at peace. On other days, it feels like wading in the salty water by the ocean shore, watching the waves bicker amongst one another in the distance, until suddenly, one approaches, gaining momentum, growing larger as it eats the smaller waves in its path, and then fully engulfing me in a cold, confusing storm. Suffocating, yet inevitable. A menacing inevitability.

My mind has oscillated between these worlds for the last three months of quarantine. There are days when the realities of the

hungry waves feel closer than others. Those are the days when loved ones feel more vulnerable to danger, when the wounds of systemic racism feel hopelessly too deep, when a minute more in quarantine begins to feel like eternity, or when it feels like the world is spiraling in its own chaos. However, on other days, a sense of new normal settles within me, and I cherish the simple pleasures of daily routines, such as evening strolls with my parents and the weekends exploring hobbies such as sketching or dance.

More than the overwhelming doom of the tsunami days, the unpredictable fluctuations between my high and low tides drive my discomfort.

I wonder what makes some moments feel so beyond my grasp of control versus others? Why and how does my mind flicker between both realities? And how can I liberate myself from the gloomy shadows altogether?

This period of time during the coronavirus pandemic has posed challenges to many of us, robbing some of us of our lives, safety, livelihoods, social lives, graduations, or loved ones altogether. Recently, I have been reflecting on how I can safeguard my own well-being from being taken with coronavirus as well.





I have found the fundamental Jain principles of Anekantavad, Aparigraha, and Ahimsa as helpful frameworks to assess, diagnose, and prescribe actions I can take to find peace and opportunity among the chaos.

## I. Anekantavad

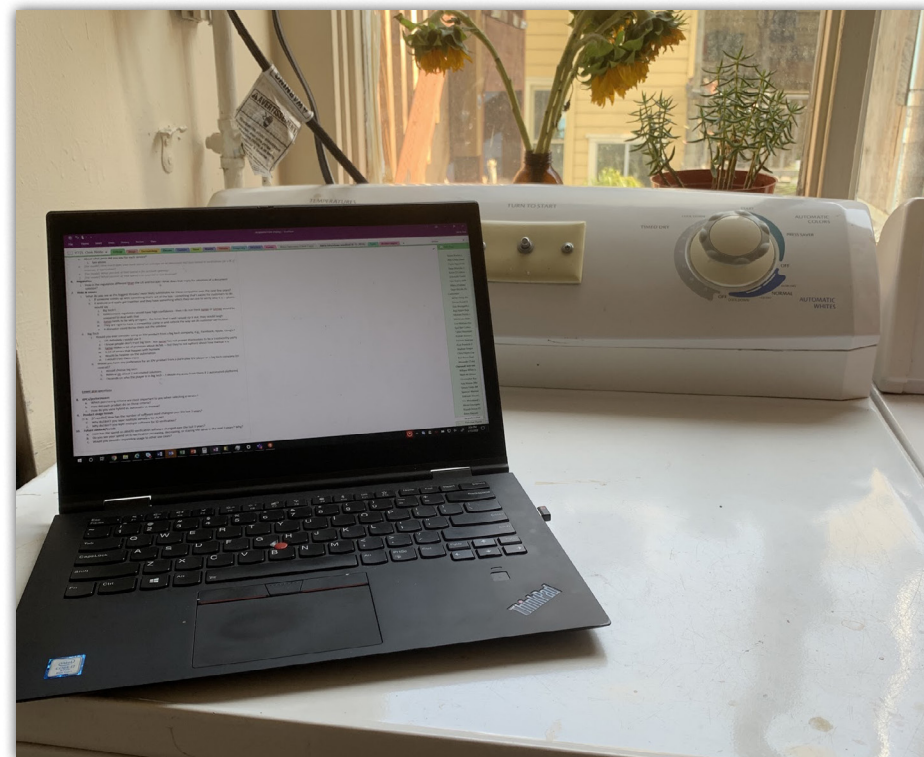
Last Sunday night, I found my heart rate running ahead of my breath again. Monday morning was just 7 hours away. Another week of endless Zoom meetings, without additional social interaction, another week of humanitarian crises, with no end in sight. Though I felt enormously grateful for the privilege of safety, to be with family, and to have the means to self-quarantine, I still felt anxiety creep into me - an

anxiety of the unknown. How long will this continue, and was there a solution?

**Fearing the unknown is fearing that something bad may happen, something less than where we are now or where we used to be.**

It implies that some moments are better or worse than others, and it is exhausting and tiring to carry the burden of future bad days on our shoulders.

My heart rate returned to normal when I reminded myself of the tenet of Anekantavad, or multiplicity of views.



Anekantavad asserts there is no single interpretation of the truth. All moments are relative, defined by how we choose to experience them.

An unknown duration of quarantine may be simultaneously overwhelming for me, but also a source of relief to know that we are a bit safer thanks to the social distance. I am fascinated by how I can at once experience both “the good” and “the bad.” Sure, “bad things” may happen; for instance, a loved one may get sick or I may lose my job. But how I experience the suffering following that bad event is largely relative and depends on how I experience a certain event. For example, the same event of getting a B on an exam could be completely devastating for one student but a huge success for another - it simply depends on the context with which they experience that event.

In other words, I realized there are no *inherently* good or bad days that I must brace myself for - I simply would experience some future days as worse than others based on my state of mind on that day and prior experiences. Now, the degree of control one really has in experiencing days as good or bad is a topic of much debate

- however, I felt comforted and empowered in recognizing that I had *some* power in determining how good or bad the future will feel, regardless of what actually happened.

Thinking of Anekantavad reminded me that I need not fear the unknown, because each event could be experienced in a thousand different ways - some bad and some good - and I had



the power to practice habits that allowed me to experience more positive days. However, I was still puzzled by how to tactically train myself to experience the “bad days” as “good days.”

## II. Aparigraha

When I think of the “bad days” I have had in quarantine, a couple of common themes appear to surface repeatedly. I find my mind

longing for things I never even knew I desired, like the feeling of *being late* for something, of having to hurry past the stores and tourists on Market St. to catch the subway just three minutes away. I find myself missing people, missing my office, missing the freedom to do whatever I want. I also feel guilty - the guilt of feeling any morsel of dissatisfaction when there are millions of people going through

of my attachments and practice Aparigraha. Aparigraha is the virtue of non-possessiveness, and it implies that we must remain equanimous even in the absence of the things and experiences we love. To me, Aparigraha also extends to letting go of our attachments to our own egos, abandoning the idea that I should experience this or that, and instead compassionately extending the I to we, reframing



so much worse and the guilt of being unhappy despite so many comforts around me. I feel the discomfort of recognizing my privilege and ignorance to even consider wanting to go back to how things were.

I believe my longings manifest from my attachments to my way of life, people, and objects; and my guilt comes from a recognition that I should let go

the focus of one's desires to seeking joy and happiness for not just oneself but for living beings around her too.

Despite this recognition, I felt it challenging to simply “be equanimous,” to not just feel sad about the things I missed. When reflecting on ways to tangibly move towards this state of mind, I thought of the advice my sister, Dipal, often gives her



young patients when trying to get them to eat healthier. She knows telling kids what they can't or shouldn't eat will just be hard and unproductive. Instead, she advises them to eat more of the things that are good for them. Filling their tummies with veggies and fruits automatically limits their longing for the junk to stop missing it. It allowed me to find more upliftment from my community's well being too, whether it may be of the nation, my family, or friends. I could appreciate the beauty of my past events while acknowledging their impermanence because I was now less afraid of their absence. The experience helped me pandemic, I still feel restless. The truth is, there still exists an immense suffering shared within our communities today. This pandemic has brought physical, financial, mental, and social pain of varying magnitudes to many of our sisters and brothers across the world. The pandemic has highlighted gross inequities in



food, without forcing them to stop loving their unhealthy treats. In the same way, actively pursuing new activities I could enjoy during quarantine, like reading "The New Jim Crow," admiring the impeccable rose gardens in my neighborhood with my grandmother, or playing rounds of Codenames with childhood friends over Zoom, allowed me to limit my unhappy desire for my pre-quarantine life without ever telling myself

realize that the core of practicing Aparigraha lies in internalizing that every moment, with or without some of the things I love most dearly, carries the potential of feeling beautiful. To me, that was equanimity.

### III. Ahimsa

While recalling Anekantavad and Aparigraha have helped me take one step closer to finding a sense of peace during the

our healthcare system, exposing minorities of color to far greater harm than other groups. The recent murder of George Floyd has brought to light the gross systemic racism that infects our nation everyday, as insidious and far reaching as the coronavirus. Seeing and hearing about this pain from family, friends, and my communities often puts me at unease.

To me, the core Jain tenet of Ahimsa, or Non-Violence, extends beyond "doing no harm" mentally, verbally, or physically.

**To me, Ahimsa means to actively strive to mitigate the harm of others when I have the capacity to do so. Inaction, in the face of harm, may be harm itself.**

Over the last few weeks, I have found that while practicing this form of Ahimsa is simply the right thing to do, it was also the remaining puzzle piece in my quest to find purpose, and thereby peace, during this time. You see, the moments in quarantine that gave me the most energy and hope were those where I saw my community members step up to make others' lives a little bit easier.

These heroes were my sister, for treating patients in the hospital every day; my mom, for teaching virtual classes for kids out of school; my dad, for always checking in on the mental health of his coworkers; family friends that surprised us with milk from Costco, and the essential workers

at the grocery store, who wipe down every cart before handing it to the next customer. These heroes were the protesters and emerging social activists who were fighting for racial justice for the Black community, my fellow South Asians who were committing to building allyship

up creatively and thoughtfully. Watching my heroes has inspired me to be intentional about how I can give back to my community using the skills and resources I have. Given my role at a management consulting firm, I found my platform to mitigate the economic impact



in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. They were the leaders, young and old, who were investing time, money, and an unfathomable amount of mental capacity to helping the world recover. The list goes on and on.

As stressful and volatile of an experience as living through this pandemic has been, it has been equally energizing seeing individuals around the world step

of the coronavirus by building an internal company initiative to help small, minority owned businesses in my area navigate the ripple effects of this pandemic. Additionally, through my membership in our loving and empowering Jain community, I found an opportunity to begin my journey towards practicing anti-racism through a grassroots movement now taking shape as Jains for Justice.



"GLIDE in SF, an organization I really admire, has been feeding hundreds of homeless individuals during COVID."

Practicing active Ahimsa helps us build empathy with our fellow humans, reminds us we are not alone, and shows us the positive change each of us is capable of contributing. I discovered that practicing active Ahimsa through these projects filled me with a sense of duty and purpose. It was the vehicle through which I could practice perceiving future days as sources of hope.

#### IV. Conclusion

I'll be honest - there are still moments in the pandemic that make me anxious. Just the other day, my company announced that no one is returning back to the office until at least Labor Day and I felt it again - the cold, unfathomably large wave

engulfing me - *when would life go back to normal?* However, reflecting on how I can use Anekantavad, Aparigraha, and Ahimsa to stop fearing the future, let go of my attachments to the past, and make the best of the present has helped me recover from those moments of anxiety much faster and experience them less frequently. Instead of standing static and drowning in the inevitability of the oncoming tides, they have inspired me to bravely ride with the waves -- and possibly even have fun while doing it. No doubt, people are struggling in visible and invisible ways; however, I fundamentally believe that the pandemic will also give birth to unprecedented moments of human kindness. As chaotic and catastrophic as this year has felt, its ashes

have cleared the ground for opportunity of radical healing. We have the unique chance to practice *jiv daya*, compassion for all living beings, especially those most vulnerable, and mend not only our communities but also ourselves through servitude.

I urge you, the reader, and all members of our young Jain community to think of ways we can uniquely contribute and make another's waves a little less turbulent. If any of these ideas resonate with you or you would like to continue discourse about how our community can help in the pandemic relief efforts, I would be delighted to talk -- after all, we are all in this together.

— Rea Savla

[rea.savla@gmail.com](mailto:rea.savla@gmail.com)

## YJA BOARD OF TRUSTEE SPOTLIGHT



SEEMA JAIN

II. How do you practice Jainism on a daily basis?

I keep my Jain practice very simple. I know that the next generation will reform Jainism, and in order to keep the basic principles in sight, I adapt to their needs to preserve the religion.

I remind myself of the 3 A's (Ahimsa, Anekantavad, Aparigraha) and AGED (anger, greed, ego, deceit) every day.

I am a proud vegetarian striving to be a vegan, and I practice yoga and enjoy meditation as well. I am hopeful that my children will follow and maintain the Jain Way of Life if I continue to practice these basics of Jainism.

III. What does YJA mean to you?

I was only 25 years old when we hosted the first-ever YJA convention in Chicago. As a Co-Chair on that team, I knew our most important task was to ensure that parents would trust us to have their children attend for the weekend. However, my personal interest centered around creating an organization that allowed Jain youth to come together and discuss religious, cultural, and social issues. While watching this organization grow over the past 25 years, I never could have imagined how it would come full circle. Today, my three children, Sarina (24), Sahil (22), and Sanjana (19) are old enough to attend YJA events. My dream has come true, and I am thrilled to see how YJA has thrived over the last few decades.



## PINK PITAYA HUMMUS

### Ingredients

2 cups cooked chickpeas	2 tsp salt
4 tbsp tahini	1 tsp cayenne pepper
100 g pitaya puree (can substitute 1/2 cup frozen pitaya chunks or 1 tbsp pitaya powder)	1-2 tsp red chili flakes
1 tsp asafetida powder	1 tsp smoked paprika
1/2 cup lemon juice	2 tsp ground cumin
	2 tsp olive oil
	1/4 cup water

### Directions

Add all ingredients to a food processor and blend until creamy! Serve with some spring veggies and fruit, or as a spread on your favorite seedy cracker.



## CREAMY COCONUT DAAL

### Ingredients

1.5 cups red lentils or chana daal	1 tsp asafetida
1.5 cups chopped tomatoes	1 red chili or jalapeño, finely chopped
1/2 cup squash (zucchini or dudhi), diced	4 lime leaves
3 cups water	1.5 tsp salt
1 can coconut milk	1/4 cup lemon juice
2 tbsp coconut oil	Optional: cilantro, cherry tomatoes, and almonds/peanuts to garnish
1 tbsp curry powder	Papadum to serve
2 tsp turmeric powder	
1 tsp garam masala	
1 tbsp dried ginger	

### Directions

Heat oil in a big pot. Add the spices and chili and cook for 4-5 minutes until aromatic. Rinse the lentils and add to the pot, and quickly stir until liquid is absorbed. Add tomatoes, squash, and coconut milk, and boil to desired consistency (~15 minutes). You can either blend everything together with an immersion blender for a creamy soup or leave chunky. Season to taste salt and lemon juice. Garnish as desired! Serve with papadum or rice of choice.



## NO-BAKE LEMON COCONUT RAW MACAROONS

### Ingredients

1/2 cup shredded unsweetened coconut	Juice of 1 lemon
1 cup almond flour	Zest of 1 lemon
2 tbsp coconut butter	1 tsp vanilla
1 tsp dried ginger	1 tsp salt
	2 tbsp agave nectar

### Directions

Blend all ingredients together in a food processor. Shape dough into macaroons. Top with lemon zest. Let the macaroons set in the fridge for at least 30 minutes. Store in the fridge in an airtight container.



## FLUFFY VEGAN OAT PANCAKES

### Ingredients

1.5 cups gluten-free oat flour	1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
2 tbsp agave nectar	2 heaping tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp vanilla extract	1/4 tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon	1 cup plant milk of choice

### Directions

Whisk all ingredients together, ladle onto a pan at medium heat, cook for 2-3 minutes until little bubbles appear on the surface, flip and repeat! Note: you can make oat flour at home simply by blending oats into a fine flour. Top or mix in your favorite berries or vegan chocolate chips!



*Pinkie's Palate*

JAIN VEGAN COOKING & LIFESTYLE

[pinkispalate.com](http://pinkispalate.com)

 [@pinkispalate](https://www.instagram.com/pinkispalate)



# SYSTEMIC RACISM EXPLAINED: DEFINITIONS & RESOURCES

Jainism provides us with the core beliefs of ahimsa, compassion, and kindness. The injustices being inflicted on the Black community are a clear violation of these fundamental virtues. Our hearts go out to the Black community right now, who have experienced continued pain and suffering as a result of systemic racism. YJA stands in solidarity with those who are peacefully working to dismantle racism in an effort to create a more just system. We are working to provide further education and awareness about this pervasive issue so that we can reflect on our values during these times and better ourselves.

On Sunday, June 7, 2020, over 150 families from Sanghs across North America joined us for a Navkar Jaap, along with a [presentation by Hetali Lodaya](#) on systemic racism and inequality in the United States. The subsequent discussion focused on what we can do as individuals and as a community for the betterment of society.

## Jaap

The meditative repetition of a mantra or a divine name.

## Racism

Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior. ([Oxford Languages](#))

## Privilege

Social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. ([UCSF](#))

## Unconscious Bias

A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group. ([Oxford Languages](#))

## Microaggressions

Brief and common daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental communications, whether intentional or unintentional, that transmit hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to a target a person because they belong to a stigmatized group. ([American Psychological Association](#))

[Here are a few examples.](#)

## Equity vs. Equality

Equality is typically defined as treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the same opportunities. Meanwhile, equity refers to proportional representation (by race, class, gender, etc.) in those same opportunities. ([Winston-Salem State University](#))

## Read



### [Actively Dismantling Systemic Racism - Jaylen Patel](#)

Addresses recent events surrounding systemic racism by understanding significant keywords, initiating thoughts on new and sustainable directions to create a racially just social system, and providing resources to stay educated and contribute to the cause.



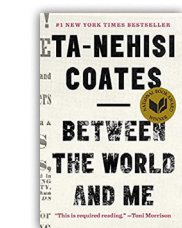
### [An Open Letter to Jains - Sara Jain and Sahana Mehta](#)

An educational letter geared towards members of the Jain community in hopes of increasing awareness and kick-starting conversations with Jain principles at the core.



### [A letter to Indians of my generation - Kalpana Galagali](#)

A public school teacher shares her connections to the Indian culture and how the lessons she's learned can inspire change.



### [Between the World and Me - Ta-Nehisi Coates](#)

A guide to understanding the United States' history and current racial crisis.



### [Mapping Police Violence](#)

An in-depth statistical analysis of police violence in recent years.



### [Citizen - Claudia Rankine](#)

Discusses microaggressions and racial relations in the United States by drawing on famous people and cases such as Serena Williams and Trayvon Martin.



## Watch



Systemic Racism Explained



George Floyd, Minneapolis Protests,  
Ahmaud Arbery & Amy Cooper |  
The Daily Social Distancing Show

## Listen



### Code Switch (NPR)

Hosted by journalists of color, this podcast tackles the subject of race head-on. It explores how race impacts every part of society — from politics and pop culture to history, sports and everything in between.



### Intersectionality Matters!

Definitions and effects of intersectionality amongst the Black community hosted by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate and a leading scholar of critical race theory.

## Engage

### Join the conversation on YJAxReflect!

YJAxReflect is an easy-to-use Facebook page where the young Jain community can come together to be themselves, interact with and learn from others, discuss, respond, comment, and dive into topics of Jainism like never before.



it is time  
to shatter the stereotype  
of model minority  
we must no longer act tall  
by treading on someone else's toes  
we can no longer stay silent  
while our Black brothers and sisters  
fight for their right to be  
seen.

heard.  
loved.

— Dhvani Mehta

“To me, Black Lives Matter is a movement, a call for change that has highlighted many wrongs within our country's history and present that affects not only the Black community but everyone. I often feel angry or upset about the situation and the system, but we can not deem ourselves helpless. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were inspired by Jainism and initiated powerful, yet peaceful revolutions. Now, it's our turn to ignite change.”

— Juhi Shah

“In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all souls as we regard our own self.”

— Mahavir Swami



It was December of 1993 when I received a phone call from Aashish Vaidya.

“We are a new Jain youth organization and would like your help in organizing our first convention for Jain youth in America.”

With that simple call, my life changed forever.

That year, I joined the first-ever YJA Executive Board. The next six months were chaotic, with hours of phone calls and meetings, but in the end, we successfully pulled off the first YJA Convention in Chicago, IL, laying the foundation for the future of YJA!

In addition to creating friendships that have lasted over 25 years now, YJA gave me so much more. At the 1994 January YJA Board Meeting, I also met a sweet young lady named Dipal Vaidya. In the following five months, while we were planning the convention, we also ended up planning our wedding. We got married in May and went to the convention that July as the first “YJA couple.”

After the convention, my life changed as I went back to graduate school, moved to Oregon, and started to raise a family. As years passed, my focus shifted from building YJA to raising our children and growing my career. YJA became a distant memory, but the Jain principles I grew up with and learned about at that first convention have stayed with me in both my personal and professional lives.



# A FLASH FROM THE PAST AND SOME FUEL FOR THE FUTURE

BY: SANJAY VORA

Today, I am an executive at Intel Corporation, and would not be in this position without applying Jain principles to my work every step of the way. As a new, young employee at Intel, I saw Jain principles being exercised and broken every day. Some managers were open and honest while others purposefully hid information. I found Satya (Truthfulness) to be a critical trait that the best leaders consistently displayed. These leaders were always honest even with the bad news. I also saw the lack of Achaurya (Non-Stealing) by my peers, which was particularly frustrating when others took my work and presented it to management as their own.

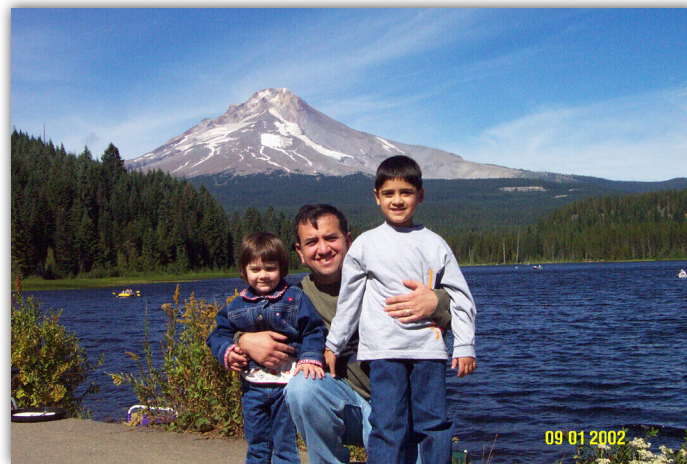
As my responsibilities grew and I took on more senior roles, I always tried to remember our core Jain principles as a leader.

Ahimsa (Non-Violence) became important—focusing on positive thoughts about others, especially in highly charged discussions, was critical. Aparigraha (Non-Possessiveness) became significant when other groups required help from our team, and we had to put their priorities above our own. For the past two decades, I have believed that the constant application of Jain principles has

been the key to gaining trust and respect in the workplace.

Being a “1.5G Immigrant” that was born in India but raised in the United States, I realized how easy it was to walk away from our Jain beliefs just to “fit in.” With our kids, my wife and I have taken a more modern approach by providing them the information they need on Jainism, speaking to them about the values, but in the end, allowing them to make their own decisions on how to apply Jain principles to their lives. Today, we have raised two wonderful children that are active members of the YJA family.





Watching YJA transform over the past 25 years has been truly remarkable. I never imagined that YJA would grow from a few hundred Jain youths coming together in 1994 to the stable, mature 5000+ youth organization that it is today. Each year, a new group of young leaders helps build the organization to be stronger and closer than the year before. YJA has had many successful conventions, strong initiatives, and revolutionary results.

So where should YJA go next? Like a child that matures to adulthood, YJA, as an

organization, has reached its adulthood.

**I believe now is the time to start planning for the YJA of the Future.**

YJA's membership is comprised of both today's and tomorrow's doctors, engineers, attorneys, business leaders, and political leaders. And beyond the current membership, YJA has tens of thousands of adults that have been a part of the YJA family since its inception. YJA has access to an enormous amount of

untapped capital and resources in the Jain and Indian communities across North America. It's time to establish bold and audacious initiatives as part of a long-range plan and tap into the available resources to achieve these goals.

You have the strength, expertise, and foundation to grow YJA into becoming one of the nation's leading youth organizations. Think big and be bold! I look forward to seeing the YJA of the Future and how YOU are going to play a role in building it.



Dipal and Sanjay Vora  
"The First YJA Couple"

# SUBCOMMITTEE SPOTLIGHTS

## SARA JAIN - PUBLIC RELATIONS



I truly love all the people I've met and the passion each and every one of them shows for our organization! It's incredible to see how many people care so much about YJA and are willing to work so hard to make all the initiatives and projects a success. I loved getting to work on the PR graphics for retreats. Making them and seeing them on all of YJA's social media was one of the coolest subcommittee experiences I've had so far. Additionally, I enjoyed seeing the senior spotlights get posted. Getting to celebrate our seniors who didn't have more formal celebrations was an incredible initiative!

## RIHI JAIN - FUNDRAISING



I love the sense of family that YJA gives you. Even if you're new, YJA members make you feel right at home, and before you know it, you'll have made friends that last a lifetime! I am looking forward to the launch of the YJA shop. We've been working on this for many months now and we're psyched to be able to release items for the entire YJA community to enjoy! My favorite YJA memory is the Mid-Atlantic Poconos Retreat this year. I was able to make new friends, reconnect with old ones, and learn so much about Jainism. I also had a blast skiing (even though I fell) and staying up late to play games with my fellow YJAers.

## BHUVNI SHAH - EDUCATION



I am awestruck by every single person I have met through the YJA's subcommittees I have been a part of. Their energy and passion for YJA and the other things they do are always inspiring me. My favorite YJA Project I have worked on has been the YJA Restaurants page. Although it is still a work in progress, it is something I wish I had when I was younger. I think that it will be very useful for young Jains in high school and college like me who are trying to define their borders on their own for the first time. I am most looking forward to providing quarantine-friendly educational content. Now that many of us are at home, we have a minute to reflect, and I hope that we can provide content and programming to help this time be more fruitful for spiritual growth.

## KRITI SHAH - PUBLICATIONS



I love that YJA provides me the opportunity to strengthen my bond with Jainism through unique initiatives and projects while also allowing me to make connections with young Jains around the world. My favorite project that I've helped with is Maharaj Saheb Messages (MSM) because it has provided me the opportunity to collaborate with so many different YJA initiatives, projects, and subcommittees, as well as a diverse group of people. I've also thoroughly enjoyed working on YJA Restaurants, and I'm so excited about its release. It feels like every obstacle I've ever had regarding Jainism is slowly being solved with each new initiative or project.



# LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES SPOTLIGHTS

## RAHI SHAH - MID-WEST



I love the expansiveness and openness of the YJA community! This year I got to help plan the Mid-West Retreat, specifically the ice breakers session. It being my first retreat, I was unsure of what to expect, but when I arrived at the house, I made so many connections and felt like I fit right in. I loved all the deep conversations, the intense mafia games, and the sessions everyone worked so hard to put together. Shout out to everyone who helped plan the sessions! Additionally, as a part of YJA's Publications Subcommittee and the Aneka podcast team, I can't wait to continue sharing ideas and values through those mediums. From the lifelong friendships I have created to all the different values and lessons others have taught me, I will truly cherish the memories YJA has given me.

## KUSHAL SHAH - WEST



I love YJA because it's a unique melting pot where you can meet different people. My introduction to YJA was when my cousins, Kahan and Needhi, forced me to attend the Southeast Retreat. It ended up being a really fun experience! The Seattle retreat has been my favorite event so far. The group made it a great space for engaging conversations while having lots of fun!

## MIRA SHAH - SOUTH



I love YJA because I get to be around people who are similar to me, and I enjoy being able to discuss different topics with them. My favorite YJA event which I helped plan was the Clothing Drive. It made me feel really good to be doing something for others, and a lot of donations were given too. I'm really looking forward to planning more events, especially community service ones, and of course, I'm looking forward to the next convention! My favorite YJA memory was during the Houston lock-in at Discovery Green - we all played various games and met people from different cities.

## KRISHNA MODY - MID-ATLANTIC



My favorite thing about YJA is meeting new people from all over the United States and being able to work with them to spread Jainism, celebrate our culture, and plan events for others to have fun at. The 2020 Poconos Retreat has been my favorite YJA event so far because I got to ski for the first time and lead a session. Additionally, meeting everyone in person was a lot of fun!

## SHAIL SHAH - NORTHEAST



YJA is a community and a family. We're a group of Indians spanning close to two decades with different goals and backgrounds that come together to show how much we love our culture. It's made up of family and friends that we've grown up with, friends that we made while losing our voices during the all-nighter at convention, or friends that we've recently made while being really bad at Codenames at #LocoForPoco, or while making the best lemon cookies at the best retreat of the year at #WeTheNorth. I'm looking forward to taking advantage of the beautiful Northeast summer and gathering with some fellow YJA-ers to go up to the White Mountains. YJA is a community that follows you wherever you are, and regardless of where we end up YJA will only be, as Charlie Puth once said, "One Call Away."

## PURVA SHAH - SOUTHEAST



The number one thing I love about YJA is the people! My favorite YJA event that I've helped plan was the Tampa Mini-Retreat; although none of us could make it to the Southeast Retreat this year, we had a really good time making pizzas. We also had some insightful discussions, and we all got a chance to learn from each other. It was a good time full of cheesy jokes (lol) and good memes. My favorite memory was definitely the 2018 Convention! Some of the discussion-based sessions were my favorite as I liked hearing my peer's perspectives, and of course, making new friends. Getting hype with them at Garba/Raas and the All-Nighter when we got a chance at endless discussions and numerous card games was a blast.



# THE TEMPLE THAT CAME BEFORE ANY JAINS

By: Ankith Desai

Standing in Buena Park, CA at the Jain Center of Southern California (JCSC) is a 35-foot tall, teakwood Jain temple resembling the Palitana temple and is the first Jain Temple in the United States. Dating back to around 1901 or 1902, the Jain Wooden Temple was contracted for the “Louisiana Purchase Exposition” held in St. Louis, Missouri to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase. It was hand-carved by more than 65 artisans commissioned by the British Raj of India in a span of about 2 years.

Right after the exposition, the temple never found its way back to India or Britain and was taken apart to stick in storages, until it was bought by an unknown art collector; this collector never put it back together again, and it subsequently fell into the hands of Las Vegas Hotelier Howard Hughes through an auction. He put it for display next to the pool of his Vegas Casino Castaways to add to the Polynesian theme of the property.

Around the late 1980s, Castaways filed for bankruptcy and was replaced by The Mirage Casino. Upon hearing this in the 1980s, Jain residents of Southern California wrote to Hughs to acquire the temple. They were able to broker a deal in 1988 with the estate of Howard Hughs, where the temple would be donated for a large tax deduction.

Upon arriving at JCSC in 1995, this 14-ton Jain artifact came in many pieces, like a puzzle, that was only to be properly displayed when repairs were done to certain areas of the temple and when a large enough hall could be constructed to house this temple indoors. After renovations of the current model of the Jain Center finished in 2004, the Wooden Temple was finally assembled in 2005 and displayed as the pride of all Jains as the first representation of Jainism in the U.S. before any Jains would have even immigrated to the country.



In JCSC's pioneer to preserve and grow Jain history and community in the U.S.,

- JCSC opened the doors to its permanent Derasar in 2008
- JCSC celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2013
- JCSC hosted YJA Convention in Los Angeles in 2016
- Most recently, JCSC hosted the JAINA Convention in Ontario, California in July of 2019

## JCSC Today

- Pathshala is held every-other Sunday for over 450 students, with 15 religion classes by school grade ranging from ages 3 to 18, along with Hindi and Gujarati classes that give college credit once a certain proficiency is demonstrated.
- The center has its very own Youth Committee which hosts monthly events such as Bowling, Holi, and Carnivals, as well as their annual Winter Camp, which takes buses of Pathshala students to a nearby campsite for a 4-day excursion of religious sessions, evening activities, and team building.
- JCSC has grown to span 4 separate buildings to host many classrooms, kitchens, and presentation halls, in addition to the main building in which the Derasar is located.



## SANGH SPOTLIGHT: JAIN CENTER OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



From February 28th to March 1st, 42 young Jains from across the country met in Saugatuck, Michigan, and spent three days together at the 2020 YJA Mid-West Regional Retreat.



# 2020 #MIDBEST REGIONAL RETREAT





Miten Shah  
Mid-West Regional  
Coordinator

What a weekend! From February 28th to March 1st, 42 young Jains from across the country met in Saugatuck, Michigan, and spent three days together at the 2020 YJA Mid-West Regional Retreat. Throughout the weekend, attendees participated in unique, thought-provoking sessions and various exciting activities. Together, these encouraged attendees to learn more about Jainism, understand each others' perspectives, and ultimately, foster new friendships and memories. I feel honored to have been a part of this weekend, which only came together through the efforts of an incredible team of Local Representatives (LR) and Executive Board Members. I am already counting down the days until the next one. Continue reading below for some reflections and highlights from the weekend!



Ravi Shah

While this retreat wasn't my first, I could tell it was going to be just as exciting as the previous one I attended once I stepped onto the never-been-done-before 16-person "hype van." We tapped into our competitive sides (at least I know I did) when we were told that everyone would be split into teams for a big grand prize at the end of the weekend. One of the activities I really enjoyed was our Jain vegan bake-off where everyone made cookies and were judged by 4 judges who, in my opinion, definitely picked the wrong cookies as the winners. The retreat experience was finished off with an all-nighter packed with Mafia betrayals, and before I knew it, we were running around the cabin blasting "The Box" with people we had made lifelong memories with, all in just 3 days. With this, I already can't wait for the next #MidBest retreat!



Rahi Shah

As a Local Representative and a first-time attendee, I had a one-of-a-kind experience. It was especially rewarding to plan out various aspects of the weekend, including sessions and activities. It was great to see the hard work pay off, as well as meet the other LRs on the team that I was only used to only seeing over virtual calls. My weekend went from staying in one house with 40 other individuals, most of whom I had never known or met in person, to networking and building new connections with many of them. It was a memorable experience, and I can't wait to make more memories at the next retreat!



## Jainism 101

To kick the retreat off, attendees participated in a Jainism 101 Pathshala session led by YJA's Director of Education, Harshita Jain. The session provided an overview of Jainism and its principles, practices, and rituals. It was a good refresher for many attendees who were already well-versed with the core principles of Jainism and also a great introduction for the few who were not as familiar. It was an enlightening discussion in which attendees shared their personal

experiences about growing up at local Sanghs, visiting Tirths in India, and speaking with Maharaj Sahebs to better understand ways to apply Jainism in the modern world.

## Bowling

Midway through the weekend's activities, attendees took a short break at the nearby bowling alley. While playing for their teams, attendees were able to have some fun and bond with one another in a more casual and social setting. Throughout the event, it was inspiring to see each attendee support and mentor each other in every possible way, which created an environment where everyone could feel comfortable and welcomed. By the end, all teams succeeded in playing without bumpers - because, well, they are the #MidBest!



## Yarn of Appreciation

To wrap up the retreat, attendees gave a shout-out to someone who they felt had left an impact on them that weekend through a discussion they had, an impression they made, or an experience they shared. Passing the yarn from one person to the next, attendees gained a greater appreciation for one another. Before they knew it, they were all connected by a single yarn and by the power of gratitude. This retreat brought together attendees from all over North America, many of whom didn't know one another coming in, but left with relationships that will last forever.



By: Miten Shah, Rupal Sanghavi, Somil Sanghvi, and Vatsal Gandhi



# HAIKU-NA MATATA

Haiku-na Matata was an interactive hour where the Jain Networking Forum (JNF) members flexed their poetic prowess and artistic abilities (or lack thereof)! Attendees wrote haikus introducing themselves, drew visuals that described “Life After Lockdown,” and paired those images with more haikus! Needless to say, some of them were unable to adhere very closely to the “5-7-5” syllable structure.

A haiku is a poetic form consisting of 17 syllables arranged in three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. It first emerged in Japanese literature during the 17th century, as a reaction to elaborate poetic traditions, though it did not become known by the name haiku until the 19th century.

Originally, the haiku form was a description of nature suggestive of one of the seasons, evoking a definite, though unstated, emotional response.

Leaves change colors every spring  
Comfort zones are to be broken  
Rings form every year

Jubin Shah | Louisville, KY

Sleep, food, and travel  
My priorities are straight  
Dance comes in fourth place

Anvita Jain | Austin, TX

Southerner at heart  
Loves her friends and family  
Often lost in thought

Rupal Sanghavi | Dallas, TX

Cooking is past time  
To experience the world  
Travel is my future

Aastha Kodia | Woburn, MA

Tiny yet still tough  
From an emerald desert  
Lost in the lone star

Dhvani Mehta | Austin, TX

Trudeau is awesome  
Will rehabilitate you  
I've seen too many shows

Kriti Shah | Edmonton, AB

I like Dr. Fauci  
He gives good advice to us  
Ignore him, I would not

Ketan Kapasi | Austin, TX

I wear many hats  
Dancer, rapper, IT gal  
Call me Miss Nacho

Prachi Shah | Philadelphia, PA

Hi my name is Sidd  
Alter ego is thrilled face  
I like Raas, tennis

Siddharth Shah | Houston, TX

I come from Texas  
But since have moved to New York  
And now I'm stuck here

Sohum Daftary | New York City, NY

National Parks and  
Vegan baking are my fav  
Hi, it's me Neelam

Neelam Savla | Northridge, CA

Kinari's my name  
Public health work is my game  
Michigan's my fave

Kinari Shah | Plymouth, MI

A guy from Chittor  
Living in the Bay and loves  
Dal Bati Churma

Rupesh Nalwaya | Sunnyvale, CA

Bay Area Kid  
Exploring is my hobby  
Rainforests all-day

Vishal Jain | Alamo, CA

Always challenging  
Never stops never stopping  
For better or worse

Saurin Shah | Chicago, IL

The mind wanders  
Hitting redline hits the soul  
Found my happiness

Ryan Mehta | Charlotte, NC

Like translucent glass  
Homegrown in the PNW  
Eager traveler

Rushil Vora | Portland, OR

A guy from Mumbai  
Trying to bring life everywhere  
Loves to Cook, Travel and Dance

Vatsal Shah | Bentonville, AR

Global when it comes to my life  
Being adaptive is my style  
Travel & adventure is great than life

Dhairya Dholiya | Chicago, IL





YJA congratulates all of the 2020 Seniors in our community.  
Happy graduation, and congratulations on years of hard work and the grand accomplishment!







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