

## **The FIRST Annual JAIN ACADEMIC Convention in North America**

The first of its kind virtual Jain Academic convention was held on Saturday November 7, 2020.

This convention was planned, organized and conducted by Dr. Ana Bajzelj, Shrimad Rajchandra Endowed Chair in Jain Studies at University of California at Riverside.

The conference opened with a very melodious singing of the namokar mantra by Mrs. Yogi Shah, followed by welcome and greetings by Mr. Mahesh Wadher (President of JAINA) and then by Dr. Jasvant Modi (a great philanthropist for Jain Academic Education and also Regional Vice President, (West) of JAINA).

Both Mr. Wadher and Dr. Modi stressed the need for Jain academic education in colleges and universities in North America, progress made and their commitment to support many such programs in near future. Both the dignitaries shared the tremendous progress in this journey particularly in last 16 months.

Mr. Mahesh Wadher then launched and presented to the convention the hot of the press just published 140-page special issue of Jain Digest. The entire issue is devoted to Jain Education in North America. It covers Jain Academic Education and Jain Pathshala.

The 140-page volume contains 55 articles written by 44 authors, containing information about Jain education in academic institutions and in Pathshalas. It is packed with information on a huge revolution happening in front of our very eyes, led by Jain diaspora, but also excellently supported by Jain scholars and academicians who are transforming the landscape of non-violent education. It reflects a RENAISSANCE in Jain Education globally.

This work is generously funded by the diaspora and showcases a new 'Shatrunjaya' for Jain Wisdom, emerging and inspiring, in an objective scientific way to students and scholars of all ages. Here is the link to the magazine, which you can download and read at your leisure: [https://www.jaina.org/mpage/Jain Education in North America](https://www.jaina.org/mpage/Jain_Education_in_North_America)

This issue contains articles by

- Prof. Padmanabh S. Jaini and Dr. Jeffrey Kuan
- Heartfelt motivating articles by Dr. Jasvant Modi and Mahesh Wadher
- Visionary and Historic articles by Dr. Chris Chapple, Dr. Shugan Jain, Dr. Dipak Jain, Dr. Atul Shah, Dr. Sulekh Jain and Dr. Nitin Shah
- Articles by 20 University Professors showing their passion about learning, researching, and teaching Jain Philosophy
- Comments by several college students about leaning Jainism
- Information about New Initiatives such as upcoming Jain academic centers, Online Jain Studies Channel, Jaina Online University, etc
- History of Pathshala Education
- Articles by Dr. Pradip Shah (Chicago) and Siales Jain (Los Angeles) about local Pathshala

- Other initiatives by JAINA Education Committee such as Jainism Blog, Jain Education, Workshops and Jain Academic Bowl

The 2 opening remarks by the 2 JAINA dignitaries were then followed by a very illuminating Keynote Speech by Dr. Christopher Chapple, Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles). In his talk, Dr Chapple shared the details of the journey of several migrating communities from South Asian countries, the opportunities, hardships and the road blocks they faced to survive, planting their roots in this land, sequential changes (both good and not so good) in the US immigration laws and the seeds of philanthropy.

For the Jain community the changes in US Immigration laws in 1965 were the water shed and slowly many Jains migrated to USA from India, Africa and Europe and their efforts in settling down and excel in business and many professions.

The recent emphasis by a few Jain Philanthropists to establish Jain presence in the academia is very remarkable. In particular he narrated the discussions and thinking of last 25 years in the Jain community and commitment by Dr. Meera and Jasvant Modi and several other visionary donors is exemplary. Dr. Christopher Chapple welcomed the first Jain academic convention and emphasized how important it is for all the Jain academicians to get together at one common platform and share their progress and vision to advance Jain Studies in North America.

Following Dr. Chris Chapple's presentation, Dr. Sulekh Jain (Chair JAINA Academic Liaison Committee) led the audience to very informative journey of the developments in Jain academic Studies particularly in last 15 years. A 41 slide PowerPoint presentation titled "JAIN Academic Education in North America; our journey has just begun" provided wealth of information about many programs and initiatives that were started by the Jain community to get to where we are today. *His entire PPT is available at the end of this report.*

After all these preliminaries, the organizer of this symposium Associate Professor Ana Bajzelj shared the motivation behind the convention, aims and objectives of this convention and also some housekeeping and time scheduling rules.

Now one by one in 15 minutes each, following academicians presented the highlights of their activities of teaching, research, publication, special events and symposiums etc. and their vision and plan to enhance Jain Academic Education.

All the talks were divided into 4 sessions and each session allowed some time for Q & A

The presenters were.

Dr. Ana Bajzelj University of California at Riverside, CA  
 Dr. Brianne Donladson, University of California at Irvine, CA  
 Dr. Lynna Dhanani, University of California at Davis, CA  
 Dr. Christopher Miller, Loyola Marymount University, LA  
 Dr. Steven Vose, Florida International University, Miami, FL

Dr. Shivani Bothra, Rice University, Houston, TX  
Dr. George James, University of North Texas, Denton, TX  
Dr. Claire Maes, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX  
Dr. Sarah Pierce Taylor, University of Chicago, IL  
Dr. Gregory Cline, Trinity University, San Antonio, TX  
Dr. Ellen Gough, Emory University, Atlanta, GA  
Dr. Sushama Parekh, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA  
Dr. Andrew Bridges, California State University, Fullerton, LA  
Dr. Benjamin Zenk, University of Hawaii, Hilo, HI

In the end, Dr. Nitin, Vice Chair, JAINA Academic Liaison Committee thanked all the presenters and the audience and offered all the help from the Jain community to enhance Jain Studies further.

This was the end of the formal convention. After this all the academics had their private business meeting which was guided by two senior Jain Scholars; Dr. Christopher Chapple (LMU) and Dr. John Cort (Dennison University)

**JAIN Academic Education in  
North America; our journey has  
just begun.**

**Sulekh C. Jain**

November 7, 2020

Presented at the First Jain Academic  
Convention

# A BIG WELCOME

- Welcome to this first Annual Jain Academic Convention.
- It is a major new initiative and we want it to grow over time.
- Today, you are only 12 plus scholars but as soon as the threat of Covid-19 is lifted, many open positions (I will share with you a little later), there will be that many more of you next year ( I hope).
- Now put your thinking cap and plan a much bigger and meaningful event next year and beyond.

# A BIG WELCOME

- I understand, Dr. Lynna Dhanani is already excited about it. Thank you Lynna ji.
- Suggest that you all select one most suitable time to hold this convention year after year and stick to that time /period.
- We in the Jain community are truly grateful to Prof. Ana Bajzelj. It is her vision and hard work and we are here today because of her.
- Ana is visionary hard worker and a very powerful glue to connect all of us together.

## **Till 15 years ago**

- Hardly any presence of Jainism in Academia in North America.
- Jainism was mentioned just in periphery of non-violence/world religions discussion or as a foot note tradition only.
- Few scholars were available with knowledge and trained who could teach Jainism.
- **As a result, there were no Job openings also in the academia at that time.**

# Then Scene started Changing

- In 2004, Dr. Shugan Jain in New Delhi, India, a very successful technologist, businessman, visionary and passionate leader volunteered to fill this vacuum for educating and training scholars in Jainism.
- He committed his all waking hours, and तन, मन & धन for this cause.
- Established the International School for Jain Studies (ISJS) in India.





# About International School for Jain Studies - ISJS

- It is non-sectarian .
- Is highly Academic and economical.
- Is University based.
- For Foreign scholars, it makes India a class room.
- It is experience based where scholars can see, feel, touch, taste and smell living Jainism.
- It uses the existing resources (scholars, facilities and infrastructure) of the Jain community in India.

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# ISJS ( [www.isjs.in](http://www.isjs.in) )

- It offers programs each summer and winter.
- There are 5 stand alone programs of 3-6 weeks ( from Intro to Jainism to advanced courses in Jainism) to Full time faculty, research /doctoral students, post graduate and undergrad students and High School Teachers.
- Syllabus is approved/accepted by some universities and students earn credits from their own universities.
- Students have come from more than 40 universities and several countries; USA, Canada, Europe and Asian countries.

# More About ISJS

- ISJS has also published several books,
- Runs a quarterly Peer Reviewed Research magazine,
- Several research projects,
- year round seminars and conferences
- Hosting scholars from overseas.
- Often many universities contact ISJS.

# ISJS Class in New Delhi



# In Just 15 years



- ISJS has now educated more than 700 Academic scholars and High School Teachers from all over the globe.
- ISJS Program inspired several of them to pursue higher studies & PhDs in Jainism from Prestigious universities.
- Nearly 20 fresh PhDs and more in Pipeline.
- Now, we have adequate numbers of well qualified scholars in Jainism which was not the case 15 years ago.

# Establishment of JAINA Academic Liaison Committee (ALC).

**In 2008, JAINA Established the Academic Liaison committee.**

**Its mission is to,**

- Create, nurture, educate and enhance awareness of Jain Dharma in academia by various means.
- Develop & facilitate English speaking scholars training, and their availability in US Academia.
- Encourage younger Jain scholars to be trained by means of scholarships, fellowships, and increased employment opportunities in academia.

# JAINA ALC Logo



# **JAINA Academic Liaison Committee - ALC**

- Facilitate, encourage participation and collaborative atmosphere with Jain community and academic institutions.
- Develop a dialogue with and facilitate the promotion of studies in Jain dharma by encouraging the establishment of Centers, Institutes, Post- Docs fellowships, Lectureships, Professorships, Chairs, Centers etc. in Jain dharma at Academic Institution across North America.
- Today, ALC has 21 Jain leaders from across America, U.K and India as its members and it is one of the most active committees in JAINA.



## Another Progress on the journey

In 2010, Jain Education & Research Foundation established the first Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship in Jain Studies at Florida International University in Miami, Florida; which became fully functional in 2012 with the appointment of a Jain Scholar

Dr. Steven Vose.



## Journey continues

- Several visionary Philanthropists in USA; committed to support this noble cause with their LAXMI - लक्ष्मी, Time and Stewardship.
- These donors have committed nearly \$14 million so far and all universities matched with about \$30 million of their own funds (total nearly \$44 million).

# Journey Continues

With Jain community nurturing,

- now we have Chairs, Endowed Professorships, Lectureship, Post Doctoral Fellowships and Jain Studies programs flourishing at more than 20 universities.
- **Nearly all appointed faculty are ISJS alumni.**
- **Please Note;** nearly all Chairs and academic positions have been named in the name of tirthankar Bhagwans and not in the names of the donors; a major historical step.

# Where Are we now?

- California and especially Los Angeles area are becoming a hub (like **Oxford or Cambridge**) of Jainism.
- Soon, this concentration of academic Scholars in this area ( most probably) will be the largest in the Jain academic world any where.

# Where are we now ?

- We now have Jainism presence
- at more than 20 universities.
  - Several more universities are under our serious consideration.
  - In addition, several other support programs have been or are being funded and implemented.

# **Current Academic Positions in North America in Jain Studies established by Jain Community**

## **Endowed Chairs in Jain Studies**

1. Shri Parshvanath Presidential Chair at UC Irvine ,

**Dr. Brianne Donaldson**

2. Mohini Jain Presidential Chair at UC Davis,

**Dr. Lynna Dhanani**

3. Shrimad Rajchandra Chair at UC Riverside

**Dr. Ana Bajzelj**

4. Bhagwan Vimalnath Chair at UC Santa Barbara .

**POSITION OPEN**

5. Bhagwan Suvidhinath Chair at Cal State U Long Beach.

**Dr. Purushottama Bilimoria as Interim Lecturer**

**Permanent Position open**

# Endowed Chair

6. Shri Shantinath Endowed Chair in Ahimsa Studies and Director of Ahimsa Center at Cal Poly Pomona (just established)

**Prof. Tara Sethia**

7. Endowed Chair in Jain and Hindu Dharma  
Cal State U, Fresno, CA

Established November 10, 2020

# Signing Ceremony with Univ. of California at Irvine





# Endowed Professorships

8. Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship at FIU Miami, FL,  
**Dr. Steven Vose**
9. Bhagwan Rishabhdev Professorship at UNT Dallas,  
TX  
**Dr. James George ( he is retiring)**  
**Position to Open**
10. Bhagwan Mallinath Professorship at LMU, LA, CA  
**Dr. Christopher Miller**
11. Bhagwan Ajitnath Professorship at CSU , Northridge  
**Dr. Claire Maes (will start August 2021)**

# Post-Doctoral Fellowships

12. Bhagwan Mahavir Post Doc fellowship,  
Rice U, Houston; **Dr. Shivani Bothra**
13. Bhagwan Sumatinath Post Doc Fellowship,  
San Diego State U. **Position Open**
- 14.. Bhagwan Shitalnath Post Doc Fellowship at  
University of Toronto, Canada.  
**Position advertised and now the selection  
process soon**
15. Bhagwan Chandra Prabhu Post Doc  
Fellowship, Willamette University, Salem ,  
Oregon. **Position Advertised**

# Other Programs

16. Bhagwan Shantinath Lectureship at Cal State U Fullerton, **Dr. Andrew Bridges**
17. Bhagwan Vimalnath Lectureship at UC Santa Barbara, CA, **Jonathan Dickstein.**
18. Graduate Study Program, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont CA, **Sushama Parekh**
19. Emory University, Atlanta, **Dr. Ellen Gough**
20. Bhagwan Mahavir Full year Scholarship to study Prakrit in India ; 3 scholars. (2 from SOAS + 1 from U of Chicago. **We will be offering the same in 2021**
21. Ahimsa Center at Cal Poly Pomona,. **Dr. Tara Sethia**

# Signing Ceremony with Cal State U Fullerton



# Other Programs

22. . Bhagwan Neminath Endowed Program in Jain Studies at University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT.  
( just established on October 8, 2020).
23. . Support to Jain Study Program at University of Chicago.
24. Endowment for Jain Studies and Culture at Cerritos Community College.  
( to be signed any day).

# Other Programs to be formalized very soon.

25. Bhagwan Anantnath Endowed Chair in Jain Studies at University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. **Position will open**
26. Bhagwan Abhinandan Lectureship in Jain Studies. UCLA  
**Position to open soon**
27. University of Dayton, Dayton Ohio. Jain Studies Program  
**Dr. Subhash Jain, Adjunct Lecturer**

# Annual lectures

28. Rooplal Jain Lecture at University of Toronto, Canada.

29. Chander Mohan Jain Lecture at U of Western Ontario at London, Ontario.

Dr. Claire Maes delivered the lecture there on October 7, 2020

30. Shailendra Palvia Jain Scholar Lecture series at U of Long Island, NY.

Scheduled on November 12, 2020

# Other significant Programs

31. Shrimad Rajchandra Fellowship to PhD Program at UC Riverside- 4 fellowships.

Nicole Lewallen, UCR , first awardee

32. International School for Jain Studies to train scholars in New Delhi, India. Nearly 700 participants so far .

Accepting applications right now for winter ISJS  
Dec 27 –January 8 ( ON ZOOM) and in person  
summer 2021



# More programs

33. Annual Jain Academic Convention; The first on November 7, 2020; a full day event.

This is a new Start. Hope is that overtime this will grow into a respectable meeting place of Jain Scholars.

34. 2021 Summer School on Jainism for our youths in North America. To be planned, will need help and ideas from you all academics

35. On line, free/open course offering by LMU by Dr. Chris Miller started.

# Many additional Programs to support Jain Academic Education

36. Academic Seminars at each JAINA convention.
37. Participation in annual AAR and DANAM conventions.
38. Donation of Jain books to University libraries.
39. Dialog on science and Jainism , Symposium on Jain Mathematics at MIT; this is a first. **December 12-13, 14 , 2020 on Zoom now and in person June 2021**
40. Hosting students to Jain temples.
41. Support to themed Conferences.
42. Nearly 50 books by Jain scholars.
43. Travel grants to scholars.
44. 140 page special issue of Jain Digest Magazine all devoted to Jain Academic **Studies Fresh PDF right now**

# 45. Meet & Greet with Scholars at Atlanta



# JAINA E-Library

46. To support Jain Academic activities, several years ago, under the Chairmanship of Pravin K. Shah, JAINA developed an e-library

This is a store house of huge information consisting of many thousand books, 3 millions pages and growing every day.

Now you can search each book for any particular word

It is made available Free to scholars all over the world and is being used extensively.

# 47. Eleven+ Students doing PhD in Jainism Now in USA

- Venu Mehta , U of Florida
- Anil Mundra , U of Chicago
- Itamar Ramot ,U of Chicago
- Seema Kiren Chauhan, U of Chicago
- Shradha Jain , U of Chicago
- Mansi Agrawal, Yale U
- Iljea Lee , Yale U
- David Saint John, U of Texas
- Miki Chase, John Hopkins U
- Nicole Lewallen, UCR , California
- Jain ([info@yogaschule-jain.de](mailto:info@yogaschule-jain.de))

# Universities under our consideration

- U of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, IL, Bhagwan Muni Suvarat Swami Endowed endowed Chair
- UC Berkeley. Berkeley, CA.
- University of Lausanne and Berne in Switzerland.
- Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium. Endowed Chair
- Brown University, Rhode Island Endowed Chair
- Emory University

# What else is happening in the month of November, 2020 ?

- **November 11, 2020**, UC Irvine, Shri Parshvanath Presidential Chair in Jain Studies Inaugural Lecture in Ethical Innovations,,  
Dr. Brianne Donaldson
- **November 21, 2020**, Cal State U, Fullerton, Symposium- Ahimsa, Environmental Ethics, and Jain Concepts of Life,, Dr. Andrew Bridges

# What else is happening in December 2020?

- **December 5, 2020:** Second Annual Shrimad Rajchandra Lecture, speaker: Eva De Clercq (Ghent University).
- **December 12-13, 2020:** UC Riverside Jain Studies Symposium, "Illness, Medicine, and Healing in the Jain Tradition," keynote speaker: Dagmar Wujastyk (University of Alberta)



What else is happening in December 2020?

December 12-14, 2020

Symposium on Jain Mathematics in  
Collaboration with MIT.

Contact Sulekh Jain

# What about Europe?

- Except SOAS and Ghent U(Belgium), there is a big gap/ vacuum in Europe.
- We have made a good financial offer to Ghent U for a funded Chair there. Waiting for their response.

# On Line Classes in Jainism



**LMU**  
**Jain Studies**

Dr. Christopher Patrick Miller

Bhagwan Mallinath  
Assistant Professor of Jainism

Loyola Marymount University



A BIG THANK YOU

Enjoy this first convention