



## ISJS NEWSLETTER

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### SPEAK UP

#### **PRESERVING HERITAGE IN THE MODERN ERA: THE ROLE OF JAIN EDUCATION**

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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Jain education stands as a crucial institution in preserving the rich cultural and philosophical heritage embedded in Jainism. As the world undergoes rapid transformations, the role of these educational institutions becomes pivotal in ensuring the transmission of ancient wisdom to the next generation. Jain education acts as a custodian of values, providing a holistic foundation rooted in principles such as ahimsa (non-violence), truth, and non-attachment.

The first and foremost responsibility of Jain education in the contemporary era is to preserve and transmit the core tenets of Jain philosophy. By immersing students in the profound teachings of Tirthankaras and Jain scholars, these institutions create a living link to the past. The preservation of Jain scriptures, rituals, and ethical guidelines becomes a mission critical to maintaining the integrity of the Jain tradition.

**Adapting Pedagogy:** While the preservation of tradition is paramount, Jain education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must dynamically adapt its pedagogical approaches to bridge tradition with modernity. This adaptation is essential to ensure that the ancient wisdom is not merely memorized but is internalized and understood in the context of contemporary challenges. For example - Jain University, International School for Jain Studies, etc. Integrated innovative teaching methods, interactive learning platforms, and practical applications of Jain principles.

Jain education should become a laboratory for experimentation, where traditional principles meet modern challenges. Interactive workshops, case studies, and real-world applications of Jain ethics can provide students with a nuanced understanding of how to apply these values in a rapidly



changing world. This adaptation is not a compromise of tradition but a dynamic response to the evolving needs of the present.

**Fostering Ethical Leadership:** Jain education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must extend beyond the traditional focus on academic excellence. It should serve as a crucible for nurturing ethical leaders who embody the principles of Jainism in their actions. For example - Dr. Chenraj Roychand's (Founder Chairman, JAIN Group & Chancellor) vision to generate a culture of educational excellence has led to the development of numerous successful educational institutions like JA IN (Deemed-to-be University), Jain Colleges, Jain International Residential School, Jain Heritage Schools, Jain Public Schools and Jain Toddlers. The emphasis on ahimsa, compassion, and non-attachment creates a unique foundation for shaping individuals who not only succeed in their professional endeavors but also contribute positively to society.

The social responsibility of Jain educational institutions goes beyond producing skilled professionals; it involves cultivating individuals with a deep sense of empathy and a commitment to social justice. For example: SDJ International College and International School for Jain Studies, etc. intertwined Jain values with leadership development programs, these institutions produce graduates who are not only academically proficient but also ethically grounded.

**Apply Jain Principles to Contemporary Challenges:** The changing landscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands individuals who can navigate complex ethical and societal issues with wisdom and discernment. Jain education plays a pivotal role in nurturing critical thinkers who can apply Jain principles to contemporary challenges. Anand Jayprakash Vaidya in his work "Making the Case for Jaina Contributions to Critical Thinking Education" focused on the relevance of the Jain concept for critical thinking education at the introductory level.

Encouraging students to engage in discussions and debates, analyze real-world problems through the lens of Jain ethics, and propose innovative solutions fosters a mindset of thoughtful inquiry. This approach equips students with the skills to address issues such as environmental sustainability, social inequality, and ethical business practices, aligning them with the values of Jainism.

**Embrace Technology:** In the age of globalization and digital connectivity, Jain education should leverage technology to enhance accessibility and provide a global perspective. Integrating digital tools, online platforms, and e-learning modules expands the reach of Jain educational institutions, ensuring that the Jain values resonate beyond traditional boundaries. Surya Kannoth quoted that JAIN University, Kyndryl, and USDC have embarked on a journey that not only addresses the



challenges of today's educational landscape but also lays the foundation for a more accessible, personalized, and impactful learning experience for millions.

Digital platforms can facilitate virtual classrooms, allowing students from diverse geographical locations to access Jain teachings. This not only broadens the impact of Jain education but also fosters a global community of individuals committed to Jain principles such as Ahimsā, Anekāntavāda, Aparigraha, and Karma Theory. Moreover, the use of technology can make educational resources more accessible, enabling a wider audience to benefit from the wisdom embedded in the Jain teachings.

**Empower the Youth:** Jain education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century becomes a catalyst for positive change by empowering the youth to be agents of transformation. The curriculum should extend beyond theoretical knowledge and include practical applications that encourage students to actively engage with social and environmental issues.

Empowering students to participate in community service, environmental conservation projects, and social justice initiatives instills a sense of responsibility and compassion. By nurturing a generation that not only upholds Jain values but also actively contributes to societal well-being, Jain educational institutions such as Arihanta Academy, International School for Jain Studies etc. became key contributors to positive social change.

**Conclusion:** Jain education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is pivotal for preserving and transmitting Jainism's cultural and philosophical heritage. To summarise the topic the following key points-

- **Custodian of Values:** Jain education serves as a custodian of values, adapting pedagogy to bridge tradition with modernity.
- **Ethical Leadership:** Jain education creates ethical leaders who contribute positively to society.
- **Dynamic Adaptation:** Its dynamic nature is evident in applying ancient wisdom to contemporary challenges.
- **Global Accessibility:** Embracing technology ensures global accessibility to Jain values.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Empowers the youth to be agents of positive change by actively engaging with social and environmental issues.