



## ISJS NEWSLETTER

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### Speak Up

## ALL JAINS ARE ONE

**Krupali Virag Shah**

[krupali1579@gmail.com](mailto:krupali1579@gmail.com)

Sectarian differences in Jainism have significantly hindered its growth. The conflict narratives presented in Jain literature and history have inflicted immense suffering on people from both factions (Shwetambar and Digamber). This sectarian animosity has fostered a mutual hatred, often intense. In their eagerness to promote the teachings of Lord Mahavira, both rival sects resort to derogatory criticisms of each other's beliefs and origins. These internal divisions have caused considerable harm to the overall progress and unity of the Jain community. The deep-rooted differences and the negative narratives associated with each faction have led to mutual animosity.

While visible divisions exist, the fundamental philosophical beliefs of both groups are largely in harmony. Their main distinctions lie in practices and interpretations. Despite the complex history of splits within the Jain community, the differences between the two groups remain relatively minor. Although there are variations in certain beliefs and rituals, philosophically, they are quite similar. However, it is important to connect with Jainism and stay true to its principles. Many followers, regardless of their sect, choose to identify simply as "Jain," highlighting the unity within the faith.

We recently visited numerous Digamber Jain temples during our pilgrimage. At Kumbhojgiri in Maharashtra, a local informed us about the ancient Digamber Tirth – Shri Sajni Parshwanath. Upon seeing the serene idol of Lord Parshwanath in the vitraga mudra with sahasraphana, we experienced profound peace. Remarkably, no one inquired about our sect or even our religion.



Similarly, at the ancient Adinath temple in Khidrapur, Maharashtra, there were no questions or barriers. During our stay at Bawan Gaja in Madhya Pradesh, a Digamber Atishay Kshetra, we interacted with locals who enthusiastically shared insights about its history, rituals, and the dietary practices of monks.

Our visit to Shri Purushadaniya Parshwanath Tirth in Vatprad, Dungarpur, Rajasthan, highlighted the harmony between the two sects. The locals spoke of strong social ties between Digambers and Shwetambers, where inter-sect marriages are warmly welcomed. As one of the trustees explained, "The Gods are the same, the pillarstone of ahimsa is the same—only some rituals and customs differ." A testament to this unity is their joint chariot procession following the sacred Paryushan Parva of Shwetambers and the Das Lakshan Parva of Digambers.

This exemplifies the harmony that can and should exist between the Digamber and Shwetamber sects worldwide. Joint celebrations and shared spaces can bring the two closer, especially as the Jain community's population remains small and its followers continue to dwindle. Unity is the way forward for a thriving Jain future.

I observed that outside India, there are places where Digamber and Shwetamber idols are worshipped within the same building. Over time, I realized that some temples in India follow a similar practice—embracing inclusivity without hesitation or discrimination, which is truly commendable.

In many parts of India, excavations often uncover ancient idols, remnants of temples, and other sacred artifacts. At one location, an entire temple with 52 deris (Jinalayas) and several Jain idols was discovered. In an inspiring display of unity, both communities came together and mutually agreed to divide the site based on its carvings and inscriptions. In several places, particularly at ancient Tirths and Kalyanak Bhumis, only a single wall separates Digamber and Shwetamber temples and facilities, reflecting the deep-rooted harmony in these sacred spaces.

It is heartening to witness both sections reaching an agreement that has enabled the resumption of Lord Antrikshji's idol puja. This spirit of cooperation ensures that worshippers continue to have access to the revered idol.



Personally, I believe that Jainism is a religion built on mutual understanding and adaptation. The animosity often portrayed on social media does not reflect reality. Those who are truly knowledgeable and deeply understand the essence of religion choose to rise above superficial disputes based on sects or divisions.

I wrote a poem in Gujarati about how I feel on this subject, and I am reproducing it here in English. The poem urges Jains to focus on the core principles of their religion, such as nonviolence and knowledge. It calls for unity among Jains, transcending sectarian divisions, and serves as a call to action, urging them to wake up and revive their faith.

We are Shwetamber and Digamber later,  
We are Jain first and foremost.  
We are not bound by any section, we are Jain ascetics...  
We are followers of Jain Dharma.

Leaving behind debates and disputes,  
Following the path shown by the valiant Lord,  
Understanding the principle of Karma...  
We are followers of Jain Dharma.

In debates and disputes,  
Our holy places became desolate,  
We imprisoned ourselves,  
Forgetting those who taught us to let go...  
We are followers of Jain Dharma.

Due to actions and inertia,  
The younger generation has become distant from religion,  
Ignorant of scriptural knowledge,



Religious values have been forgotten...

We are followers of Jain Dharma.

Where there is a stubborn adherence to politics and positions,

Where there is a waste of money behind pomp and show...

We are followers of Jain Dharma.

We failed to create rich and prosperous Jain Pathshala,  
Listening to the Jinvani and Agam at home has been forgotten...

We are followers of Jain Dharma.

Wake up, it's not too late yet,  
Otherwise, the punishment for staying asleep will be very heavy...

We are followers of Jain Dharma.

**(Original Poem – in Gujarati)**

અમે ન શ્વેતાંબર કે દ્વિગંબર ,અમે જૈન ધર્મના પંથી,  
અમે ન કોઈ સંપ્રદાયના રાગી ,અમે જૈન વીતરાગી ...

છોડી અમે ચાલ્યા વાદવિવાદને પાછળ  
કર્મના સિદ્ધાંતને જાણી, વીર પ્રભુએ ચીધવેલ માર્ગ પર ...  
અમે જૈન ધર્મના પંથી...

મારું - મારું વાદવિવાદમાં તીર્થ થયા ભેંકાર ,  
શીખવાડ્યું જેમણે છોડવાનું, તે પ્રભુને પૂર્યા અમે કેદમાં ,  
અમે જૈન ધર્મના પંથી...



ક્રિયા અને જડતાથી થઇ યુવાપેઢી ધર્મથી વિમુખ ,  
શાસ્ત્રના જ્ઞાનથી અજ્ઞાન બની, ધર્મના સંસ્કાર ગયા વિસરાઈ ,  
અમે જૈન ધર્મના પંથી...

જ્યાં રાજકારણ અને પદનો થતો હઠાગ્રહ ,  
જ્યાં ઝાકમઝોળ પાછળ થતો પૈસાનો દુર્વ્યય,  
અમે જૈન ધર્મના પંથી...

ચુકી ગયા પાઠશાળાને બનાવવાનું સમૃદ્ધ ,  
જિનવાણી, આગમનું શ્રવણ ઘરઘરમાં ભુલાયું,  
અમે જૈન ધર્મના પંથી...

જાગો હજી પણ થયું નથી બહુ મોડું ,  
નહીં તો ઊંઘતા રહેવાની સજા થશે બહુ ભારી...  
અમે જૈન ધર્મના પંથી...

