

REFLECTIONS ON CAUX, A WORKSHOP ON THE ALCHEMY OF FORGIVENESS: JAIN PERSPECTIVE

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Anita (my daughter) and I (Shugan Jain) had the privilege of participating in the Caux Forum (<https://www.iofc.ch/caux-forum-2026>), organised by Initiatives of Change of Caux Foundation in partnership with the Inner Development Goals (IDG) initiative in Switzerland. Perched high above Lake Geneva Switzerland, with breathtaking views of the Alps, Caux provided not only a beautiful setting but also a unique environment for reflection, dialogue and human connection. For four intensive days, from early morning until late evening, around 200 participants from across the world came together. They represented different cultures, faiths, professions and generations, united by a shared commitment to creating positive change – whether at the geopolitical level, within organisations and communities, in caring for our planet, or through healthier personal relationships.

One of the themes woven throughout the forum was the philosophy of the enhancing awareness of our inner self. While the Sustainable Development Goals focus on the changes we seek to create in the world through scientific researches, more effectiveness can arise from enhancing our self-awareness, openness, courage, empathy and integrity which are not just simply personal virtues, but as essential capacities for addressing today's complex global challenges-resonating the Jain principle of *parasparopagrahojīvānām* meaning living beings support one other. As I listened to the many keynote speakers, preliminary sessions, community discussions, workshops and conversations, I was struck by how naturally these ideas resonated with the timeless wisdom of Jain philosophy. For centuries, Jainism has encouraged us to cultivate awareness, examine our own assumptions and reactions, take responsibility for our actions, and approach others with humility and openness. In an increasingly polarised world, Jain principles/values such as *ahimsā* (non-violence), *anekāntavāda* (respect for multiple perspectives) and *kṣamā* (forgiveness) offer not only profound philosophical insights but also practical guidance for living with greater understanding and harmony.

One of the highlights of the forum was the opportunity Anita and I had to facilitate an experiential workshop of 3.5 hours on the theme of forgiveness as our inherent nature, titled **The Alchemy of Forgiveness: Jain perspective** integrating Jain philosophy with contemporary psychology and neuroscience. We stressed that Mahāvira, like an alchemist, performed experiments on himself to discover and experience bliss and forgiveness as nature and traits respectively of soul, arousing genuine curiosity that reaffirmed our thinking that these ancient principles continue to offer meaningful guidance in addressing modern human challenges.

Equally inspiring was the opportunity to meet remarkable individuals from around the world – peacebuilders, educators, social entrepreneurs, environmental advocates and community leaders – each working in their own way towards a more compassionate and sustainable future. The diversity of perspectives and the openness with which people engaged in dialogue left me both humbled and hopeful. Highly impressing was not only the content of the forum, but its format. The thoughtful combination of keynote lectures, interactive workshops, dialogue circles and informal conversations created an environment where learning extended far beyond

the lecture hall. Ideas were not simply presented – they were explored, questioned and enriched through genuine dialogue.

This experience has inspired me to explore the possibility of creating a similar forum format in India, bringing together Jain scholars, academics, researchers and serious thinkers from around the world to explore inner development for conscious living and sustainability, a key doctrine of not only Jainism but the entire Indian Knowledge System. Rather than another academic conference, I envision a space where scholarship is complemented by dialogue, reflection and collaboration – a place where Jain philosophy can engage meaningfully with contemporary questions and contribute to the challenges facing humanity today.

The enduring message from Caux, I carried home: **When we cultivate awareness within ourselves, we become better equipped to contribute wisely and compassionately to the world around us.**

