



To Preserve and Share Jain Dharma and Way of Life

# JAINA

## Federation of Jain Associations in North America

JAINA Headquarters: 722 South Main St, Milpitas, CA 95035 | (510) 730-0204 | www.jaina.org | info@jaina.org

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2013-2015

July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### Post-Convention Press Release

## The successful 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial JAINA Convention at Atlanta attended by 4000 promoting Jainism in North America

This 4th of July weekend, 4000 people gathered from all over the world to celebrate Jainism and participate in wonderful activities of religious education, spiritual, community and cultural. The Convention theme appropriately titled “**Jainism: A World of Non-Violence**” found its rightful site in Atlanta, the birthplace of one of the greatest global apostles of peace; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Convention was graced by over 30 erudite Jain monks, nuns, scholars (from India as well as other nations including the US), leading social activists, distinguished professionals and patrons.

Convener, Ashok Domadia, warmly welcomed everyone to 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial JAINA in Atlanta and noted that attendees from 24 countries were present. He observed that JAINA is the largest Jain organization outside India and JAINA Convention is the largest Jain Convention outside India. He thanked all the donors for record fund raising and 300+ Volunteers for their tireless efforts over a year to put together an amazing and memorable JAINA Convention.

The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA), the apex organization of Jains in the United States and Canada, with its mission of preserving and sharing the Jain way of life, hosts biennial conventions all over the nation. JAINA is a 34 years old Organization and has about 150,000 Jains between North America and Canada, being the largest Jain organization outside India. Convener Ashok Domadia and Shobha Vora Marketing, Pr and Souvenir Chair Shobha Vora of California expressed great feeling of success and mentioned that approximately 4000 registered.

Host City Atlanta's Jain Center President and Convention Board member; Samir Shah informed all that for past eight months more than 300 people have been working tirelessly to make the Convention memorable. The Convention Center's main entrance and the walkways were beautifully decorated. There was a make shift temple created at the venue for chaste worshippers to continue their daily prayers without interruptions. In that same area, there was a floral silhouette of Mahavir Swami



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Bhagwan and about an 8' x 8' replica of the temples of Samat Shikhar, with the mountain, painted and decorated with true life-paint colors. Outside the Derasar were five cubicles decorated with captivating paintings and sculptures to replicate the 5 elements of Jainism: Panchkalyanak- Chyavan, Janma, Diksha, Kevalgyan and Moksha.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, Thursday evening, the “swagatam” ceremony, welcoming all the guests, comprised of a welcome song composed by Indravadan Bhavsar followed by a fusion of classical and folk dances, showcasing a cross-country journey from East to the West including items from Atlanta to Chicago to Southern California, interlaced with welcome messages by conveners of this event.

The packed hall of guests for Raas-Garba night, young and old, decked in colorful formal costumes formed circles and performed the high-energy garba and dandiya raas with loads of fun and masti to hypnotic drum beats and popular Gujarati songs by noted singer Abhesinh Rathod, accompanied by Rinku Patel and Jayshri Khavadiya and ably supported by musicians Hitesh Bakdas, Jayanti Kabira and Kunal.

During the grand opening ceremony, procession commenced outside of GICC Center in front of Springhill Suites. Ladies clad in fetching saris and carrying “kalashes” earthen pots marched in front. They were followed by a van and beautifully and imaginatively themed floats festooned with flower-garlands, and carrying the idol of Lord Mahavir. Some participants rode, sang devotional songs and danced on the floats, while some marched in the parade waving Indian Tricolors & U.S. flags and even Kenya flags and carried banners and posters, and some in colorful costumes and attractive turbans sang and danced in the procession with jubilation. Shouts of joy from the throng of onlookers gathered along the route, greeted the floats as they arrived. The whole procession was marked with euphoria and spirit of effervescent joy.

In the main hall in opening ceremony, the guests present were Hon. Nagesh Singh, India's new Consul General to the southeastern US, UN Ambassador Andrew Young, Congressman John Lewis, Hon. Bucky Johnson; Mayor of Norcross, Mr. Nipun Mehta (a noted philanthropist), Mr. Mafat Patel of Patel Brothers and RK Sehgal of Atlanta besides other known personalities. All of these speakers enlightened the audience with their unique experiences and addressed the social issues at hand that can be remedied with the principles of Jainism. A live recorded message of Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji's was played, as JAINA was started in 1981 with the blessings from Gurudev and late



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Acharya Shri Sushil Kumarji, in Los Angeles. Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi addressed the convention with special letter to JAINA. Many charismatic speakers that shared their knowledge with the attendees and everyone engaged in constructive discussion on how Non-Violence can be incorporated in our lives today.

Co-Conveners and past Presidents of Atlanta Jain Center; Deepak Shah and Anil Shah welcomed all "We are honored to be hosting the first JAINA Conference ever held in the South East of USA" and presented a short video of Georgia Governor Nathan Deal's Greetings and good wishes. The morning Opening Ceremonies continued with recognition of sponsors- Maha Sanghpati's Atul & Rupa Shah and Sawan & Riya Shah and Sanghpati's Gulabchand & Mowanben Kothari, Mahendra & Madhulika Bapna and Santosh & Sarala Kothari. Grand Sponsors Prem & Sandhya Jain and Corporate Sponsors Patel Brothers; being recognized and felicitated with plaques, on stage.

The cultural show, a feast for the senses was an extravaganza of spectacle. The audience was totally engaged and immersed. The show included presentations from all over the country with, the high energy spirit displayed included performers from children to seniors from all over the country. There was beautiful dancing and singing of songs such as "Jai Ho" and "Senorita." Afterwards, the much-awaited Kumar Sanu rocked the stage with many of his hit songs, all of which the audience enjoyed very much. The cultural program also included the presentation of prestigious awards to distinguished members of the Jain community. the most prestigious JAINA award; the JAINA Ratna (Jewel): was presented to Mr. Dilip V. Shah of Philadelphia, PA for his outstanding commitment and dedication to JAINA for the past many decades. Presidential Awards given to Dr. Dipak Jain, Dean of Business School SASIN and Dr. Jagdish Sheth, Business School EMORY alongwith other adult and youth awards recognition.

The youth had an equally great time with their many speakers, Jain Networking Forum and Jain Milan cruises, evening dances, and opportunities for growth as young Jains in America. In as much as the adults were busy throughout the day with a myriad list of activities so were the children. They were kept engaged and entertained and trained in various exercises and games by two well-trained directors / instructors from North America operations of Masterminds International. Under the leadership of Convention Board member, Gunvant Shah, about 600 youth were engaged in various youth programs: the young adults had a Bridal Match Registry, collection of Bone Marrow cells, Jain Academic Bowl competition; JAINA's got Talent and much more. Our future



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generation of Jain leaders engaged in captivating discussion on Jainism as it relates to our lives today and were able to hear keynote speaker Nipun Mehta talk about the power of kindness. During their evening activities, they enjoyed an informal dance with DJ Mashup and a formal night full of fun. JAINA also recognized the work of eight dedicated youth members during an award ceremony on Saturday.

There were booths selling apparel, CD's, DVDs, literature mainly on Jainism, Travel companies, a booth for sinus flush NeilMed by Dr. Mehta, Navkar Mahamantra Yoga, StudioIndia.org etc. Authors Robert Arnett & Smita Turakhia also had a booth, Siddhayatan, Arham Inc., Airtour, BAPS Shayona, Maxim Tours, Bhindi Jewellers, Veerayatan and Aakaar -Marble Murtis all had displays.

Media Conference: On the first evening after the Swagatam ceremony there was an official Press Conference called by JAINA PR & Media Chair- Hemant Shah of Chicago. With the help of Shobha Vora, the Chair of the Marketing, PR and Souvenir Committees of CA and local media team Mrs. Madhu Sheth and Viren Mayani the conference was attended by Media representatives: Ravindra & Devyani Dave of Rashtra Darpan, Anjali Chhabria of TV Asia, Vinod Sharma of Bytegraph, Mahadev Desai, Mustafa Ajmeri of India Tribune, Mamta Shaha of Mangalam TV Show, Suresh Shah, Chicago of Gujarat Samachar, Akila and India Post, Lalit Zha of PTI; and Viren Mayani of Khabar. JAINA leadership team and Convention leaders of Atlanta, discussed the purpose, event details and JAINA at large. President of JAINA, Prem Jain of California mentioned that, the Convention gave an opportunity for the Jain community to come together, to bond and renew old friendships besides forging new ones. It provided an opportunity to learn and teach about Jainism.

Thanks to the Jain Center of Greater Atlanta for putting together such a spectacular Convention and dedicating months to ensure that the Jain community could have an amazing experience. It was incredible! The Convention was completely pictorially covered by Bytegraph and the sound & lights by Sandeep Savla's AV Creation's added a great flavor.

Bravo to the logistics Director and Convention Board Member, Vijay Kothari, for flawless management of the facilities, to Manish Shah for fantastic entertainment programs, to Madhu Sheth for securing Ambassador Young and Congressman Lewis as Honored Guests, to Deepak Shah, Harshad Shah, Prem Jain, Anil Shah and Sameer Shah



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for complete programming and fundraising, to Atul Shah for fantastic leadership for food committee.....and kudos to the countless others (more than 300) who served the event with complete humility and pride, for the occasion to be a mighty success, which it certainly turned out to be!

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