

Workshop Overview and Major Topics

Overview

The workshop takes Jainism beyond being just a religious identification for people. It discusses the fundamentals, which are easily applied in our daily life. The workshop uses interactive method of Learning and Communication, which needs debates, discussions and open mindedness. The workshop is not a lecture format where the audience has very little input in terms of participation and discussion.

After the several sessions on Jain axiom (postulate) and fundamental principles, the workshop delves into the brain storming discussion on powerful and **thought-provoking questions that have no absolute answers**. It includes the social and cultural perceptions as well as stereotypes and generalizations from both youth and adult's perspective.

We will be digging deep, challenging ourselves/our limited beliefs and exploring new possibilities. The discussion will provide insights into questions that are important to our youth in order to develop them spiritually, ethically, and socially in the western world.

While often difficult to reconcile divergent influences, it is critical to understand the distinctions and strike a balance amongst Indian heritage, Jain religion, spirituality and Western lifestyle. Regardless of your current level of understanding, you are bound to walk away with a new expanded view.

Major Topics Presentations

We have thoughtfully chosen some of the most important topics to be discussed in the workshop.

- Fundamental concepts of Jainism
- Uniqueness of Jain Karma Philosophy and its application in daily life.

Who governs the events of the Universe? Is it Free-will? Or Karma? Or are they predestined?

Jainism says that it is not our action but intention behind our action that binds us with karma. Then why do we give significant importance in doing as many rituals as possible and almost no importance in understanding these rituals?

- Jain Concept of Punya and Pap Karma.

Is Punya Karma really a hindrance to attain Keval Jnan or liberation? Is Jainism a selfish religion? It emphasizes only personal spiritual progress but not emphasizing helping poor and needy and be compassionate to others.

- Ahimsa and Survival of Human Life.

Killing of one or the other form of life is essential for human survival. However Jainism considers killing of movable living beings (a living being possesses more number of senses) is considered more cruel act or greater violence. The order of violence is 5 sense beings, 4 sense beings, 3 sense beings, 2 sense beings, and 1

sense beings. Since human life can sustain by using or consuming one sense being (plants, water, air, earth, and fire), Jainism advocates Vegetarianisms. Also the environmental study indicates that killing of higher sense beings has a greater impact on Environment.

Then why we have not prohibited animal products such as milk, cheese, butter Ghee etc.. in Jain diet and but excluded root vegetables?

Jain Universe.

How can we claim Jainism is a scientific religion when there are inconsistencies in our scriptures such as they claim that earth is flat, not moving, and it is the center of the universe? It explains that the Moon is bigger than the Sun, farther away from Earth than the Sun, no one can reach the Moon. Also, the location of hell is below the Earth, and heaven is above the Earth and many others claim that have been proven wrong.

➤ Holistic Spirituality – Ahimsa, Compassion, Environment, and Health.

Why do Jains use Ahimsa conveniently? On one hand Jains restrict the use of some plant foods and on the other hand allow the use of many animal products like milk, cheese, butter, ice-cream and other dairy products, silk, pearls, wool, leather (this product is obtained by exploiting and slaughtering five sensed animals).

Jain views on suicide and the death penalty

Can you explain the significance of the vows? Is taking a vow necessary for penance to progress spiritually?

➤ Path of Liberation.

Can you define Samyaktva and how would I know when I acquire it?

What is the difference between ordinary Jnan (knowledge) and Samyak Jnan?

Are doing Jain rituals like penances, puja, Samayik and Pratikraman defined as Samyak Charitra?

Why some of the Jain ascetics disperse their human waste on street in the cities of India and create health hazard for the common people. Is it a Samyak Chaitra?

➤ Explanation of various Spiritual stages of life (Gunasthanak)

➤ Jain Vows (Conducts) of Laypeople

What is the role and status of women in Jainism? Why women cannot perform certain Jain rituals? Why are women not allowed in temple or to do puja, prayer etc... during their monthly biological cycle that is necessary for our existence?

Jain views on Abortion. Whether under any circumstances is it allowed or not? Abortion as women's choice. How about abortion to save mother's life.

Jain View on Birth Control?

Social Issues - Cheating, bribing, tax evasion, amassing wealth by any means exists

in Jain societies. Where did Jain teachings go wrong?

➤ **Jain Literature and their history.**

What are the important changes that occurred over the 2500 years of history of Jainism. Why do we blindly follow certain traditions, which have no significance in current the environment

After the completion of the above presentations, most of the participants will be able to answer most of the questions that may come across during their daily life. Some of the questions may not have simple answers and there could be more than one answer.