



Thought Provoking Jain Workshop

(General discussion topics for two day Workshop)

Purpose

To educate both adults and youth (over 16 years) with regards to the fundamental principles and philosophy of Jainism and how to apply these principles in all walks of life through practical examples. This includes social, business, family, ethical, religious and spiritual environment.

To improve the communication skill of the parents with their children and youth in the discussion of religious matter.

Subject

STRIKING A BALANCE: - EXAMINING Social, Cultural, and Spiritual environment that our youth face while growing up in North America

Summary

The workshop is about brain storming and discussing powerful and thought provoking questions, which no absolute right or wrong answers. It includes the social and cultural perceptions surrounding stereotypes and generalizations from both youth and adult's perspective.

The discussion will provide the group with 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.

Discussion Topics

Examine the social constructions of culture, religion, and the traditional expectations which our youth as Indian Americans encounter growing up in North America.

Focus on issues which have to do with understanding and balancing the parent's view of the world, the way our youths are raised, and how our youth plan on living their adult and family lives.

How do the youth balance more modern views as they influence their career choices and family life desires, in relation to the different set of circumstances generated for both men and women?.

Explore the incongruous nature between what we teach our youth to practice from a religious/philosophical perspective, and the actions which are promoted by our social community.

There are many dimensions to our culture and sometimes culture and religion are treated like they are interchangeable, particularly by the adults. Do our youth believe that they have to be culturally rich in order to be spiritually rich?

Do our youth feel that our religious functions (holidays, conferences, temple openings, daily pujās etc.) mix with the social and religious aspects in a way that undermines core principles; Ahimsa, Anekāntavāda and Aparigraha (non-possession) of our religion?

Are there different expectations between males and females in our society? Is there a different set of 'rules' for each? How do we deal with gender bias and gender inequity in our society and in religious ritual practices?

Do our youth feel that our social communities promote actions which are incongruous with what we are taught to practice from a religious / philosophical / spiritual perspective?

How do we practice Aparigraha in our Western society?

How difficult do our youth find it to fulfill social expectations (career choices, family life, salary expectations, acquiring wealth and property) while fulfilling the tenants of Jainism in thought, speech, and action?

Do our youth think that the parents and the society believe that when they (youth) choose to step outside of what is traditionally expected and accepted norm, that they are rejecting a Jain way of life or are 'unreligious'?

Is the society and religion so intertwined that our communities cannot differentiate between the two?

What can we do to foster an understanding between parents and youth?

We hope that those individuals who are able to attend this session, where we attempt to reconcile divergent influences, find it useful. For those who are unable to participate in this session, we hope that the inquiry in to these issues would provide an insight into designing your life with appropriate balance between our heritage, religion, spirituality and contemporary Western lifestyle?.