

About us - the brief history of Jain Center of Central Ohio

Sometimes before 1990, a handful of Jain families in Columbus, Ohio – who used to get together at each others' homes to practice Pratikraman* and Samayik* often talked about a need to have a common place where all (not only those who know each other but anyone and all) can come and practice Jain religion. Well, this talk went on among families in social-setups for a while when a few other families also joined. A need to perform Puja and other rituals were added to the list. First such Snatrapuja was held at the Old Bhartiya Hindu Temple in Westerville. All of those participating families were invited to attend the Snatrapuja and lo, a conceptual form was born of a Jain center. The home-based practice was shifted to the old Bhartiya Hindu Temple. It began on a monthly basis but soon it became a weekly event. The family meetings began to become regular so much so that the Hindu Temple management noted that the Jain community was using the temple facility more often than any other communities. As a result, they asked us that we help the Hindu temple with a rent. A need to form a formal committee arose to handle monetary issues such as mentioned. A tax-exempt status was obtained under the name - Jain Center of Central Ohio (JCOCO) and a constitution was written in 1991. All who were present during the foundation days had a common understanding that Jain Center is not formed to run it like an ordinary business, but is run in light of principles of Jain Darshan. It is not to simply carry out usual work, but it is an opportunity to put some of the Jain principles in practice - with a necessary discrimination. In this way, serving a committee is a demanding Jain practice, requiring diligence as well as alertness.

Every year, the new committee is reminded that it should read the JCOCO constitution. The new committee must also amend it as needed by calling a general body meeting once a year. This JCOCO constitution is not a mere list of rules and regulations. When we sit in a committee to conduct the regular activities of Jain Center, we **must be aware of** our constitution. When we are aware of it, it automatically instills Samata (equanimity) in us by detaching our self from our personal agenda. When you are not attached to your personal preferences, you simply are able to watch your mind and its usual "commentary" and "opinions" while running the office. There is what you want, as a member or as a president, and there is what others want. If you are not attached to your personal preferences, you can easily be aware of this on-going struggle while in

the office. Without anchoring to the constitution, your mind may run like this: "I like this program go this way, but these people don't understand. This is too difficult to handle. I wish I didn't have to go thru this etc." However, if you are abiding by the constitution, you will be able to cease identifying with your own personal judgments/perceptions. With this attitude, your thought, "I wish I don't have to go thru this" may become "I see that I am going thru this." Here, you are no more tussling but just are aware of the tussle that is going on but without being driven by it. When you succeed in seeing your inner feelings, they stop driving you. When you are not driven by your feelings (Kasay), you are automatically in Samata or Samayik. And, isn't it for why we practice our Jain religion? But this is for those who wanted to serve the committee and are willing to accept the challenges of the everyday life. What about the regular members?

Well, for the regular members, there are special events that JCOCO celebrates round the year to emphasize the need of cultivating Jayana (awareness) in our daily routine. They are Mahavir Jayanti, Paryuhsan week, Diwali and Kumarpal no Vardhodo, monthly and bi-monthly Snatrapuja and Swadhyay/Satsang, Ayambil, an annual talk given by the lay Jains to lay Jains. JCOCO also invites Jain Scholars from round the world. The aim is to make Jayana (awareness) essentially continuous. For Jain kids, JCOCO runs a Jain Pathshala once a month, weekly Sutra Class over the phone and monthly Sutra Class in person, an annual historical Jain characters play by kids - Jain Halloween, Yoga for kids and when weather permits or during summer Fun Pathshala.

JCOCO sends out a monthly newsletter and maintains this website for you.

And now, JCOCO is aiming at building a temple of its own....

To be continued....

Pratikraman is a repenting ritual of Sutra recitation in open awareness, reflecting directly on the reality of the everyday life;

Samayik is an alert condition, performed sitting straight, with no trace of drowsiness and with no worldly goal whatsoever, completely unconcerned with benefits of worldly accomplishments for the duration of 48 minutes.