

His Holiness Jain Acharya Sushil Kumarji Maharaj (Guruji)

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(Life - June 15, 1926 - April 22, 1994)

His Holiness Jain Acharya Shri Shushil Kumarji passed away at the age of 68 years, in his Ashram at 4:00 PM on Friday April 22, 1994 (6:30 AM USA E-time) in New Delhi, India. He was affectionately called Guruji by his devotees.

Guruji was born in a Hindu Brahmin family on June 15, 1926 in a small village of Sikhampur, in Hariyana, India. The village was later named Sushilgarh in Guruji's honor. He left his family and home at the age of seven to live with a Jain monk Shri Chotelalji Maharaj, who later became his living religious guru.

When Guruji was a young boy, Shri Roop Chandji Maharaj appeared to him in spirit and told him to become a monk. Shri Roop Chandji Maharaj who left his body 100 years ago, was a great yogi and enlightened master in the family of monks to which Guruji belongs. He was Guruji's spiritual guru. So at the age of 15, Guruji took Diksha (became a monk) in the Jain Sthanakvasi sect.

Guruji pursued an academic career and obtained a degree of Shastri, Acharya, Vidya-Ratna, and Sahitya-Ratna. He also mastered classical Indian and yogic philosophies. He did not learn yogic systems from any master. His knowledge was realized through direct experience, and his powers were awakened through the grace of past lives.

It was not long before Guruji's divine mission unfolded that he began to gain recognition as a fountain of wisdom, truth, and understanding, who actively promoted peace and harmony throughout his homeland. He worked untiring to establish a sense of universal brotherhood amongst the conflicting religious traditions of India. He honored and respected all of the world's great religions as an expressions of one divine truth.

Guruji was also widely known in the Jain community for his unprecedented and highly controversial international tour which began in 1975. Jain monks are only permitted to travel solely by foot, yet Guruji recognized the wisdom in breaking from this ancient restraint in order to share the Lord Mahavir's message of nonviolence, peace and oneness of all living beings with the world at large. Since then, his acclaim as a true man of God has spread to all corners of the earth.

Guruji was a self realized master, well known for his practice of effects of sound on spiritual progress and his teachings of the Arhum Yoga system. Arhum Yoga is an ancient system for the mastery of the inner self through watchfulness and direct perception. It encompasses all aspects of philosophy and yogic practice in the Arihant tradition. It includes the Eight Steps of Yoga, sound vibration, healing, awakening of the kundalini and all divine powers, color science, holistic health, the concepts of Ahimsa, Anekantvad, and the perfection of the soul. This knowledge is based on the Matrika Vidya of the Namokar Mantra which is the foremost mantra in the Jain tradition holding much secret knowledge.

Guruji's work in India was not limited to creating religious harmony among many ethnic groups, but he had organized and presided over a significant number of World Religions Conferences.

Guruji was:

- the honorary president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace
- the director of the Temple of Understanding
- a founding member of the Global Forum of Spiritual and

Parliamentary Leaders on Human Survival

- president of the Punjab Peace and Unity Committee
- president of the Ram Janambhoomi Babri Masjid Solution Committee
- a founding member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad

These conferences have adopted many declarations advocating world peace, universal brotherhood, animal and environmental protection, and above all nonviolence.

Many of these conferences were attended by highly esteemed individuals, including various Presidents and Prime Ministers of India. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Zail Singh, Rajiv Gandhi, and Indira Gandhi were amongst them.

Guruji has founded many spiritual organizations which include:

- World Fellowship of Religions (1950)
objective - unity among world religions
- Vishwa Ahimsa Sangh (1957)
- Kundalini Science Center
objective - scientifically research the mental and physical effects of the energy awakened through yogic practice
- International Mahavir Jain Mission (1978)
objective - to spread the teachings of the Arihantas
- Arhat Sangh (1979)
- World Jain Congress (1981)
- World Center of Nonviolence

Guruji has founded many ashrams and centers in the East and West under the International Mahavir Jain Mission. His main ashram is Siddhachalam, located in Blairstown, New Jersey. Siddhachalam, is the first Jain pilgrimage place (Tirth) outside of India which was established in 1983. It consist of 108 acres, a camp ground, cabins, dining facilities, temples, and much more. It is a true retreat place. The pilgrims from around the world continue to be drawn to this magnificent and distinguished spiritual center in ever increasing numbers.

Siddhachalam is a resident community for monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen. It is headquarters for the International Jain Mission, the World Fellowship of Religions, and the World Jain Congress. It actively promotes Ahimsa for world peace, vegetarianism, and nonviolence to animals. The ashram is a wildlife sanctuary.

In 1982, Guruji inspired the leaders of eight nations to submit a memorandum demanding peace through nonviolence to the Secretary General of the United Nations. He explained that peace through nonviolence could not be compromised or exploited and would ensure the sanctity of human life as well as extending protection to the animal kingdom, the environment, and all of our Mother Earth. Guruji and his devotees also

served as the fourth largest support group for the peace rally held in New York in 1982, an event that was attended by nearly one million individuals from around the world.

Guruji successfully motivated the late Sikh leader Tara Singh to participate in an open and peaceful dialogue with the government. In 1986, the late Akali leader Sant Longowal and the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi attempted to solve the distressing problem plaguing Punjab. This accomplishment is largely attributed to Guruji who convinced the terrorist groups of Punjab to honor their compromise with the government.

When Pope John Paul's visit to India was strongly opposed, Guruji warmly reminded his countrymen that India has a long standing tradition of welcoming all individuals regardless of their denomination or belief.

Guruji successfully organized a Cow Protection Rally in 1966.

In August of 1989, Guruji was invited to inaugurate and preside over the World Hindu Conference in Britain. As Hindus regard him as one of their spiritual leaders, they enthusiastically embraced his notion of Ahimsa (nonviolence) and vowed to join him in propagating the virtues of meditation, vegetarianism, and unity.

Also in 1989, Guruji addressed the World Conference on Religions for Peace in Melbourne, Australia. He advocated the direct need to protect the animal kingdom and our natural environment. He explained that all living beings equally share the right to life.

Guruji persuaded Muslim leaders to sit in negotiation with Hindu leaders until a consensus was reached in the Lord Rama's birth place (Janambhoomi) issue popularly known as Babri Masjid issue in 1990 to 1991 in India.

In 1990, Guruji was an honored guest at the Global Conference for Human Survival in Moscow. More than 1200 individuals from 70 countries travelled to the USSR to take part in this historic gathering and were present to participate in Guruji's meditation and to hear his remarks on the need for nonviolence. At the conference he met with Mikhail Gorbachev and discussed the issues related to the establishment of world peace and global cooperation.

In 1991 he travelled to Iran in an attempt to persuade Saddam Hussein to adopt a peaceful resolution to the Gulf Crisis. Although poor roads and the prevailing war conditions prevented him from entering Iraq, Guruji was widely recognized and appreciated for his valiant efforts to stop the Gulf war.

In January 1992, the International Mahavir Jain Mission became affiliated with the United Nations as an NGO (non-governmental organization). Furthermore, the concept of Ahimsa was adopted by the United Nations for the first time in history at the Sacred Earth Summit in order to protect all forms of life existing in the world today.

In June 1992, Guruji addressed the Global Earth Gathering and the Earth Summit, the largest ever international conference held by the United Nations took place at the Riocentre in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. The World Movement of Nonviolence for Peace and Environment was launched in Rio with Guruji serving as the founder and president and Dr. Robert Muller its co-president.

In 1993 Guruji was also invited to participate in the Global Forum in Kyoto, Japan, where the International Green Cross was launched with the support of more than 700 delegates from 88 countries. Here he met Mikhail Gorbachev a second time. Guruji was very encouraged by the former Soviet leader's warm response to his visionary of Ahimsa university (which became affiliated with the United Nations Peace University in Costa Rica in 1993) and the World Movement of Nonviolence for Peace and Environment.

In September 1993, Guruji addressed the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. He addressed the

need to embrace non-violence for all living beings.

In 1993 Guruji's effort made it possible to prepare two volumes of a Jain Encyclopedia and soon to be incorporated into the Hindu Encyclopedia. This is due to be released by the publishing house of MacMillan Press.

Also in 1993 Guruji's effort made it possible to initiate a Jain study program at Columbia University, one of the oldest and most prestigious academic institutions in the world. The program will start from the fall semester of 1994. Also a Jain "Chair" has been established at the Toronto University in Canada.

There is hardly a nation that has not been touched by his efforts and all his life he worked towards the fulfillment of Guruji's divine purpose.

In today's world, how many can claim more than five decades of asceticism and selfless service in the name of peace, unity and universal brotherhood? How many individuals devote themselves entirely to the upliftment of all living beings? Guruji has done both and yet his work is far from complete. Our Mother Earth continues to cry in protest of the injustices she is forced to endure: animals, birds, trees, forests, oceans and mountains are suffering in the name of industrial greed. Everywhere men, women, and children are plagued by hunger, disease, prejudice, and oppression. Guruji had heard their cries and understood their anguish. We should continue his mission until all the world is united in a state of Ahimsa.

Excerpts from Guruji's Speeches

On Thought:

Thought is a force. Thought has unlimited power. You are what you think. Anyone can achieve complete success by spiritual awareness. 2,500 years ago Lord Mahavir gave this perfect truth, "All mankind is one." There is no superiority or inferiority, no caste or creed, Caucasian or Aryan. Weather conditions in various areas may have produced amounts of pigmentation as far as our skin is concerned, but since our systems of birth and death are the same, our smiling and weeping are the same, our reactions to pain and pleasure are similar, how can we make distinctions by caste, color, or religion? A cow's skin may be red, white or black but the milk is the same.

On Truth and Spiritual Practice (Sadhana):

Truth is one, but there are many aspects and many pathways to that truth. We must become open-minded. There is so much confusion on the spiritual path because people think that theirs is the only way, and all other ways are not correct. There is no one way.

Some people think So-hum practice is the only way to meditate, while others think navel practice, or third eye center practice is better. All of these are related. Many spiritual groups promote their gurus as the one true master for this era. They feel their way is completely separate, unique, and superior. Some say they are teaching the true kundalini yoga. Then what are we teaching?

I choose to teach you all things so that you don't become prejudiced. After that you can follow one system for practice. For knowledge, you must understand all systems.

On Ideal Community:

In today's world man is experimenting with various social and political systems. One system grants equality

(material) but takes away freedom. Another grants freedom but takes away equality. The Arihant system grants both freedom and equality in the material sense and in the highest spiritual sense. The followers of the Arihantas work selflessly without profit in mind. They consider themselves only as trustees of wealth, to protect and distribute it to aid others in a true sense of brotherhood. My dream is to see our ashram community develop into such a society of non-violence and non-attachment, always keeping in mind our duty towards mankind.

Know Thyself:

When asked what is yoga, Lord Mahavir answered, "performing only one thing at a time." This way all your actions become yoga.

Mind, body, and breath should function together. Focus your mind and do one work at a time. This is meditation. Know thyself, if you do not know yourself then how can you know God? Know your body first. Without the knowledge of body, we can not do anything. Read your body. This is our greatest book of knowledge. Go inside your body. Use breath and sound as a vehicle.

We must reach unstruck sound and uncreated light. This is the purpose of meditation. By gross sound one can catch subtle sound. When you catch the divine unstruck sound, consciousness unfolds, you dissolve, merge, and ultimately you become nothing.

Love Beauty and Action:

Love is unconditional. Love is perfect. Love selflessly. Attachment and attraction is not love. Do not think about the fruit of your actions, otherwise you will lose everything.

Love is the first principle. When you feel love then you can not forget it. Anywhere you go, love will inspire you, remind you, and prepare you. Again and again you will remember it. Love is a beautiful thing.

On Trinity:

The Oxford spirit of knowledge and learning has been a great tradition in Britain. Today, I hope we shall give birth to a New Oxford Spirit of compassion, understanding, tolerance, non-violence, love, and abiding peace.

The symbol of the trinity is part of many of the world's religions. Let us introduce a new symbolic trinity of nonviolence, love and freedom. These are the keys to the survival of humanity and a peaceful future for mankind.

The above is taken from Guruji's address to the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders on Human Survival at Oxford, England. (April 11-15, 1988)