



We Jointly Create

# Ahimsa World

Volume: 1 No.4 July - September 2004

*Parliament  
of the  
world's religion  
2004*

*Barcelona-Spain • 7th-13th July*



Parasparopagraho  
Jivanam  
Ahimsa Paramo  
Dharmah



The newsletter by **WJC** dedicated to peace and non-violence



# CHETANYA KASYAP FOUNDATION

*Dedicated NGO for Religious Harmony, Life Science, Sports and Education*

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### JEEVAN VIGYAN

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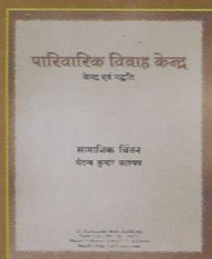
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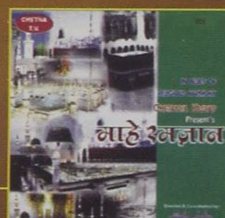
a project providing free housing with training of nonviolent, cultured and self reliant life style.

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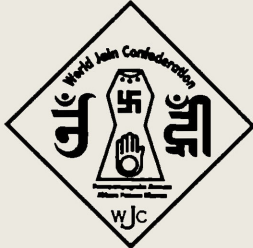
BADNAWAR

VAPI



A Quarterly News Letter for  
peace and Non-violence

**Ahimsa World**



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Disclaimer :The Views expressed in this news letter are of the respective contributor and WJC does not necessarily concurs with the same.





**PRESIDENTIAL**

Dr. L.M. Singhani



WJC was launched with high hopes and great expectations. We invited our Prime Minister to launch it. It was meant to fulfill the shared vision and dreams, which have been the warp and woof of the Jain Tradition through the ages. Those aspirations are made up of allegiance to Ahimsa, Anekant Apaarigraha and Asteya and the hopes and dreams for a nascent ascent of human consciousness and a reconstruction of the individual and the society. Ahimsa is the shining solar power of the universe of Jainism. Anekanta is the tranquilizing lunar light in the encircling darkness of claims and counterclaims, affirmations and denials, assertions and refutations. Aparigraha is another name for Restraint and Moderation for the householder; a Good Grahastha Shrivaka. Karma and Jeeva Daya is the fresh air and pure water. Asteya and Achaurya signify personal and professional integrity and rejection of self-centered greed in the rat race of life, and a sense of equity and social justice. That is also the philosophy, which Vedanta embraced and expounded. Said the seers in Isa Upanishad "Tena Tyaktene hi, Bhunjitha" (तेन व्यक्तेन ही भुंजीया) Tapas and Tyaga, Karma and Ahimsa, Tolerance and Truth are integral to the Jain tradition and its value system. Steeped in that tradition and value system, delegates went from India to Chicago to attend the first Parliament of World's Religions. Swami Vivekananda electrified the world by his famous address and speeches to the delegates and to "Brother and Sisters of America". From that composite quintessential wisdom of India arose Srimad Rajchandra and Mahatma Gandhi enlivens the philosophy of Ahimsa and the message of Gita and Vedanta for our age and time.

Few Indians are aware that a Jain barrister, the late Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi, who was born at Mahua in Gujarat on August 25 1864 went to Chicago to attend first ever Parliament of Religious and was very much with Swami Vivekananda. He was a member of the Indian team in Chicago in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when Swami Vivekananda interpreted the quintessential heritage of India to the world. Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi who was an exponent of Indian Culture, and was also an erudite Jain scholar, a philosopher, reformer and patriot. The late Shri

Virchand Raghavji Gandhi had a brilliant academic record to his credit. He secured the first position at the matriculation held in Bhavanagar and obtained the Bachelor's degree of B.A. with Honors from the Elphinstone College in Bombay and later qualified as a Barrister from London. He was a polyglot and is reputed to have been familiar with 14 languages. He translated a book from French. He was well versed in the Indian system of philosophy as well as western philosophy. An activist, he fought the 'Piggery Case', and succeeded in having the slaughterhouses at the sacred hills of Sammetshikhar closed down. He also succeeded in abolishing the poll tax levied on Jain Pilgrims at the Shatrunjaya Tirth by the Thakore Saheb of Palitana.

I had the privilege of unveiling a statue of the Late Virchandbhai Gandhi in Chicago. It is believed that he delivered as many as 535 speeches during his sojourn both in U.S.A. and Britain. He published a book "Jainism in Western Garb as a solution to Life's Great Problems". He was a prolific writer on Jain philosophy, Yoga, the principle of Karma and the Six Systems of Indian Philosophy. He attended the Indian National Congress in Pune. He represented the Jains at the "Dharma Mahotsava" held at Ajmer in 1895 and was awarded the Gold Medal. In 1899 he attended the International Commerce Conference, representing Asia. Virchand bhai founded "The Society for the Education of Women" of which Ms Howard was the secretary.

Virchandbhai Gandhi's life and work was a notable feather in the cap of India. It is unfortunate that the posterity knows little or nothing about the illustrious son of India.

I would like to pay my tribute and homage of reverence and remembrance to that great leader of the Jain tradition in the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. The World Jain Confederation owes it itself and the late Virchandbhai Gandhi's memory to create an appropriate memorial, to assist the members of his family to publish all his works. WJC should also bring to the fore the story and work of the late Virchand Raghavji Gandhi for the benefit of all Indians and the whole world at large. I am saddened by the neglect of history from which the Jain Society suffers. We must remember that Renaissance is always rooted in history and the vitality of futuristic vision in time and space. It is high time Jains woke up globally.





## Special Editorial

# **World Parliament Of Religion**

- Chetanya Kasyap

We can certainly believe that the 2004 World parliament of Religion will prove to be an important landmark in the journey of the global society to achieve peace. Accomplishment in today's electronic age has empowered human intellect to work at a great speed. Perhaps therefore, religion will have a place in deciding what this jet-set intellect wants to achieve.

There are umpteen examples in the history of human culture to show that attempts of creating a society guided by intellectual powers have brought with them the evils of contradiction, violence, fear, pain and exploitation. In all such times, great men toiled to transform such intellect-ridden societies into tolerant ones. People in different countries or different societies classified these attempts as religions and offered them as theories for balanced development. But the different form of 'New Religion', 'Old Religion' and their confused definitions were running side-by-side. A world religion congress in 1893 presented before the world society a grand scenario which formed the basis of comparison between religions followed by western and oriental societies.

Just at the ending of three centuries of machine-age, when the mark of imperialism and materialism, was at its zenith, Swami Vivekananda with the theory of co-existence of Sanatan Dharma and Virchand Gandhi

with the *anekantavada* (pluralism) principle embodied in Jainism, stunned the religious thinkers of the world. After that the world witnessed two great wars triggered by unbridled imperialism. Communism which articulated itself as a staunch anti-religion thought and eventually settled as an independent doctrine.

Finally, in 1993, another world religion congress was organised by the citizens of Chicago. Thereafter the organisation of one in 1999 in Africa and now in 2004 at Spain has brought out clearly that democracy is the only structure that makes possible a comparative scrutiny of all welfare efforts. It also underlines that the religion in different form ornamented with pluralism (*anekantavada*) can be nurtured for the welfare of the world full of co-existence.

World Jain Confederation is participating in this 2004-World parliament of Religion. Its attempt to present the Jain philosophy before the world audience underlines Jain community's commitment towards the world welfare.

I wish this parliament ably addresses the impending challenges such as shortages, terrorism, religious and economic eccentricity or hostilities, while harnessing the thoughts of great religious thinkers to create peace loving, fear-free and restrained people, who will prove it to be a landmark in the process of creating a mutually co-operative global society.





## WHY RELIGION

- Ila Shah

The 2004 Parliament of World's religion is going to be held in Barcelona Spain from 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> July. The mission of the council for a Parliament of the World's Religion is to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and contribute to a better world from their riches of wisdom and compassion.

If we look back in the history there has been no entirely new religion since the beginning of this world. The elements and roots of the religion were there as far back as we can trace the history of mankind. In the ancient world, there was no difference between philosophy and religion. The word 'philosophy' is derived from the Greek words 'philos' (love) and 'sophia' (wisdom) which etymologically means the 'love of wisdom'. The word religion comes from the latin word 'religio' (to bind). Thus, religion is the art of living, through right action, in harmony, within ourselves and with others to lead a life of peace and happiness. Although different definitions are given to explain philosophy and religion, they do not contradict each other. They are the two modes under which man and society raise the life of a higher and nobler level.

The 1893 Parliament, was the first formal public meeting of representatives of the major religions in the history of the world. John Henry Barrows, spokesman of the 1893 Parliament, saw it as the beginning of a united Christian church. However, he also turned to comparative religion for illumination with the objectives of presenting to the West the religious reality of the world, presenting to the non-Western world the best available views on the relations of Christianity and other religions and to examine the near Eastern roots of Christianity.

In the Parliament of Religions Chicago 1893, the much acclaimed was given to Swami Vivekananda's famous sentence "My brothers and sisters of America" but there was also this young man of 29 called Shri Virchand Raghvji Gandhi 'The first Apostle of Jainism in the Western country' who not only propagated Jainism but also practiced and to whom this issue of 'Ahimsa World' is dedicated.

After the first Parliament in 1893, the largest 1993 centenary celebration of parliament of the world's religions was again held in Chicago. It includes an attempt to define and then use as a global standard for behaviour the central ethical principles common to all religions. The provisional conference document signed by many of the leaders – "The Declaration Towards a Global Ethic" – included agreement on what has been called the Golden rule.

We live in a pluralist inter-racialist and multi-faith society and the need to understand one another is greater than ever before. Many people are also concerned with social problems, deprivation, injustice and imbalance of wealth throughout the world and subscribe to belief systems intended to bring about change in the human conditions. Religion helps to uncover meaning in the midst of the mundane and describe ideals which can radically transform people.

There is a principle, which is found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousands of years: what you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others. Or in positive terms: what you wish done yourself, do to others! This should be the irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions.



# महावीर वाणी कल भी आज भी

- आचार्य महाप्रज्ञी



इस विश्व में प्रकाश और तिमिर की भांति सत् और असत् अनादिकाल से है। कोई भी युग केवल प्रकाश का नहीं होता और कोई भी युग केवल अन्धकार का नहीं होता। आज भी प्रकाश है और महावीर के युग में भी अन्धकार था। भगवान् ने मानवीय चेतना की सहस्र रश्मियों को दिग् - दिगंत में फैलने का अवसर दिया। मानस का कौना-कौना आलोक से भर उठा।

भगवान् महावीर ने अहिंसा को समता की भूमिका पर प्रतिष्ठित कर उस युग की चिन्तनधारा को सबसे बड़ी चुनौती दी। अहिंसा का सिद्धान्त श्रमण और वैदिक - दोनों को मान्य था। किन्तु वैदिकों की अहिंसा शास्त्रों पर प्रतिष्ठित थी। उसके साथ विषमता भी चलती थी। उसके घटक तत्त्व भी चलते थे।

विषमता का मुख्य घटक था जन्मना जाति का सिद्धान्त। ब्राम्हण जन्मना श्रेष्ठ माना जाता है और शुद्र जन्मना तुच्छ। इस जातिवाद के विरोध में उन सबने आवाज उठाई जो अध्यात्म-विद्या में निष्णात थे।

बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् में याज्ञवल्क्य कहते हैं-ब्रम्हनिष्ठ साधु ही सच्चा ब्राम्हण है। 'किन्तु इस प्रकार के स्वर इतने मंद थे कि जातिवाद के कोलाहल में जनता उन्हें सुन ही नहीं पाई। भगवान् महावीर ने उस स्वर को इतना बलवान् बनाया कि उसकी ध्वनि जन-जन के कानों से टकराने लगी। भगवान् ने कर्मणा जाति के सिद्धान्त का प्रतिपादन किया।

वह युग धर्म की प्रधानता का युग था। साधु बनने का बहुत महत्त्व था। श्रमण साधु बनने पर बहुत बल देते थे। इसका प्रभाव वैदिक परम्परा पर भी पड़ा। उसमें भी संन्यास को सर्वोपरि स्थान मिल गया।

भगवान् ने संयम को इतनी प्रधानता दी कि उसके सामने वेश और परिवेश के प्रश्न गौण हो गए। साधुत्व की प्रतिमा बाहरी आकार-प्रकार से हटकर अन्तर के आलोक की वेदी पर प्रतिष्ठित हो गई।

भगवान् ने श्रमणों की साधना पद्धति को विकसित किया और साथ-साथ अन्य तपस्वियों के साधना-पथ को परिष्कृत रूप में

अपनाया। उनके परिष्कार का सूत्र था-अहिंसा। हिंसापूर्ण कष्ट सहने की परम्परा चल रही थी। भगवान् ने कष्ट सहने को सर्वथा अस्वीकार नहीं किया, किन्तु उसमें हिंसा के जो अंश थे, उन सबको अस्वीकार कर दिया।

भाषा सम्पर्क का सर्वाधिक सशक्त माध्यम है। मन को मन से पकड़ने वाले लोग बहुत कम होते हैं। संकेत की शक्ति सीमित है। मनुष्य बोलकर अपनी बात दूसरों तक पहुंचाता है। महावीर का लक्ष्य था-सबको जगाना। सबको जगाने के लिए जरूरी था सबके साथ संपर्क साधना। पंडिताई की भाषा में ऐसा होना संभव नहीं था। इसलिए भगवान् ने जन-भाषा को सम्पर्क का माध्यम बनाया। प्राकृत का अर्थ है-प्रकृति की भाषा, जनता की भाषा। भगवान् जनता की भाषा में बोले और जनता के लिए बोले इसलिए वे जनता के हो गए। उनका संदेश बालकों, स्त्रियों, मंदमतिओं और मूर्खों तक पहुंचा। उन सबको उससे आलोक मिला।

आज विश्व भर में जो शाकाहार का आन्दोलन चल रहा है, उसका मूल जैन परम्परा में ढूंढा जा सकता है। ब्राम्हण, क्षत्रिय, वैश्य और शुद्र-सभी जातियों में मांसाहार प्रचलित था। वैदिक धर्म में मांसाहार निषिद्ध नहीं था। बौद्ध धर्म के अनुयायी श्रमण-परम्परा में होकर भी मांसाहार करते थे। मांस न खाने का आन्दोलन केवल जैन परम्परा ने चला रखा था। उसका नेतृत्व महावीर कर रहे थे।

भगवान् महावीर का असंग्रह-आंदोलन उनके अहिंसा-आंदोलन का ही अंग था। उनका अनुभव था कि अहिंसा की प्रतिष्ठा हुए बिना असंग्रह की प्रतिष्ठा नहीं हो सकती। संग्रह में आसक्त मुन्य वैर की अभिवृद्धि करता है। अहिंसा का स्वरूप अवैर है। वैर की वृद्धि करने वाला अहिंसा को विकसित नहीं कर सकता। जिसे मानवीय एकता की अनुभूति नहीं है, दूसरों के हितों के अपहरण में अपने हितों के अपहरण की अनुभूति नहीं है, वह असंग्रह का आचरण नहीं कर सकता। व्यवस्था की बाध्यता से व्यक्ति व्यक्तिगत स्वामित्व छोड़ देता है। यह अद्भूत सामाजिक परिवर्तन कुछ शताब्दियों में घटित हुआ सामाजिक परिवर्तन है। किन्तु सुदूर अतीत में व्यक्तिगत स्वामित्व के समीकरण की दिशा का उद्घाटन महावीर के असंग्रह आन्दोलन की महत्त्वपूर्ण घटना है।





**FAMILY TREE OF GREAT SH. VIRCHAND GANDHI  
LT. SH. VIRCHAND GANDHI**

↓  
**1 Son**

↓  
**Lt. Sh. Mohanlal Virchand Gandhi**

↓  
**2 Sons**

**1. Lt. Sh. Dhirajlal M. Gandhi**

**Smt. Champaben D. Gandhi-65 (No. 1 in the Photograph)**

**2. LT. Sh. Rasiklal M. Gandhi**

**Smt. Rasilaben R. Gandhi**

↓  
**3 Sons**

↓  
**3 daughters**

→ **Sh. Dilipkumar D. Gandhi 40**  
**(No. 2 in the Photograph)**

→ **Sh. Kirtikumar D. Gandhi 30**  
**(No. 3 in the Photograph)**

→ **Sh. Chandreshkumar D. Gandhi**  
**(No. 4 in the Photograph)**

**3 daughters**

→ **Smt. Kundanben Himmatlal Shah**  
**(No. 5 in the Photograph)**

→ **Ms. Harshaben D. Gandhi**  
**(No. 6 in the Photograph)**

→ **Ms. Rupal D. Gandhi**  
**(No. 7 in the Photograph)**

→ **Mrs. Dilipkumar D. Gandhi**  
**(No. 8 in the Photograph)**

↓  
**2 Sons**

↓  
**2 daughter**

**Left Bhavnagar long back and no contact**







## SRI VIRCHAND R. GANDHI MEMORIAL TRUST FOUNDED BY WJC & JAINA

WJC and JAINA have jointly founded "Sri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi Memorial Trust". The Trust is formed to suitably modify the current VRG's birth home with modern amenities in Mahuva, Gujarat and to have a permanent memorial in it and to take necessary steps that the Samiti may feel appropriate for raising awareness of his mission, his memorial and pursue with the Government of India the matter regarding issuing the commemorative postal stamp in his honor. He was responsible in closing down the slaughter house in Sametshikhar, abolishing poll tax on Jain pilgrims at Shatrunjaya and sending money and shipload of grains to India from U.S.A. in the worst famine of 1896-97, raising awareness in the West of the importance of Jainism as an ancient vibrant world religion, propagating the relevance of Jain tenets Ahimsa, Anekant and Aparigrah and spread Bhagwan Mahavir's message across the world and defending the Indian culture and Hindu religion under the unjust criticism in the Parliament and later on, in spite of lot of odds, by attending the first ever Parliament of World Religions held at Chicago in 1893 and visiting



**Virchand Gandhi**  
Barrister-at-Law

England, France, Germany and other places during 1895 and his subsequent two visits to the West, Europe and U.S.A. He wanted to continue these activities for a long time but unfortunately death snatched him away at an early age of 37. He sacrificed his brilliant legal career, lived and died for the cause of Jainism and service to humanity. For details: Contact Pravin C. Shah, 28 Dyckman Ave., New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11040; Tel. 516-248-8265 or Email: kenpet 007@hotmail. com" Indian friends can donate to World Jain Confederation (WJC) World Jain Confederation, Shah & Nahar Industrial Estate, 338/340 A1 Wing, 3rd Floor Lower Parel (West), Mumbai 400 013. Tel./Fax No. 91 22 5662 5823 or email: wjc@vsnl.net

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# Virchand Raghavji Gandhi Yesterday and the Day After Today

- Dr. Kumar Pal Desai



Certain personalities leave indelible footprints on the sands of time, their legacy is not affected by the constantly revolving wheel of time.

At the World Religions Conference held in Chicago, U. S. A., almost a century ago, America, and the west,

for the first time, heard the determined, spirited, resonant voice of ancient India, and the message of Indian philosophy and culture. Two Indian delegates participating at this conference awakened the western world to the spiritual heritage of India. One of these was Swami Vivekanand whose success in the World Religions Conference of Chicago is fresh in everyone's memory today. But the contribution of another Indian delegate to the same Conference, Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi, the representative of the Jain religion, has a claim to equal attention by virtue of the success he achieved at the Conference and also by his work as a religious thinker.

Hundred years ago in 1893, more than three thousand delegates of different nations and religions had assembled at the conference. The conference was inaugurated on 11th September, 1893, and Virchand Gandhi, Swami Vivekanand, P. C. Majumdar and other eminent scholars from India were present as distinguished participants. The aim of this religious conference was to impart to the world the knowledge of different religions, and to promote a feeling of fraternity between followers of diverse religious persuasion, and so to pave the way for world peace.

Virchand Gandhi, a young man of twenty-nine, impressed the delegates not only by his eloquence, but also by the sheer weight of his scholarship. The scholarship, the impartiality of outlook and the oratorical skill of this man fascinated the delegates at the conference of World Religions. An American newspaper wrote, "of all Eastern scholars it was this youth whose lecture of Jain faith and conduct was listened to with the interest engaging the greatest attention."

Virchand Gandhi talked about the doctrines of Jainism in such a coherent manner that some newspapers published the text of his lecture in full. He had a most effective way of handling the otherwise abstruse terminology of Jainism. He had an extraordinary ability to clarify his statements in a consistent and logical manner. As he expounded his views, he would give his own interpretations of some of the most difficult points. He spoke as a Jain and yet he often took sides with Hindus but above all, he always spoke as an Indian.

At the conference Virchand Gandhi expounded the Jain religion in two of its main aspects, namely, Jain philosophy and the Jain way of life. He elucidated the nine elements, the six types of Jivas, the subtle strands of thought in Jain philosophy regarding DRAVYARTHIK and PARYAYARTHIKANAYA, the Syadvad and other philosophical aspects which fascinated all the cardinal principles of Jain cosmology. His discourses convinced the elite of America of the fact that the Jain religion has an authentic and rational religious tradition. Expressing his joy about this new knowledge, an American gentleman gave his opinion about Virchand Gandhi in these words :

"In this religious gathering a number of philosophers, preachers and scholars came from





India and delivered lectures and each one of them presented a new perspective and presented a new element so as to convince that their religion ranks high with great religions of the world among them was an outstanding young man of Jain religion who gave new ideas about morality and philosophy. Though he is only a house-holder and not a monk or religious preacher, he can expound so well. Who must then be his gurus ? His simple but striking philosophy of life is worth knowing, worth understanding."

Another special characteristic of Virchand Raghavji Gandhi's lectures on the Jain religion was that they did not deal in criticism of other religions. The lectures served to educate the American society regarding the salient features of Indian culture. Virchand Raghavji Gandhi is the author of *The 'Yoga Philosophy'*, *'The Jain Philosophy'* and other books of which *'The Karma Philosophy'* may be regarded as his best contribution.

Virchand Gandhi was not only a philosophical thinker but he also had the welfare of the nation at heart. There prevailed in America the belief that India was a country of tigers, serpents, magicians and the Kings. Christian missionaries also presented to foreign countries a distorted picture of the people in India. Explaining the importance of Indian culture to foreigners, he said, "It is an astonishing fact that foreigners have been constantly attacking India and in the face of all these aggressions the soul of India has stood vital and watchful. Her conduct and religion are safe and the whole world looks at India with a steady gaze."

As early as in the year 1893 Virchand Gandhi talked of the economic and political freedom of India. He said to the American people : "India is at present under the foreign hell. She is independent in the field of religion but when India will be free, she will not invade any country in a violent manner."

Five decades before the independence of India, Virchand Gandhi had the prophetic sense; he said in his lecture of *'The Jain Philosophy'* – "You know my brothers and sisters, that we are not an independent nation. We are subjects of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria" the 'defender of the faith', but if we are a nation in all that name implies with our own government and our own rulers, with our laws and institutions controlled by us free and independent, I affirm that we should seek to establish and for ever maintain peaceful relations with all the nations of the world."

Virchand Gandhi made such a great impact that the conveners and scholars of the conference of world religions awarded a silver medal to him. Subsequently on 8th August 1894 the citizens of Kasadova awarded a gold medal to him. In this city he delivered a lecture on *'Some mistakes corrected.'* The newspaper, *'Buffalo Courier'*, records the immense success of the lecture. In America Virchand Gandhi founded two institutions namely, *'The Gandhi Philosophical Society'* and *'The School of Oriental Philosophy'*. In Chicago he founded an institution namely *'Society for the Education of Women of India.'* The secretary of this institution was Mrs. Howard who had adopted pure vegetarianism and other codes of conduct of Jainism under the influence of Virchand Gandhi. As sister Nivedita became Swami Vivekananda's disciple, so Mrs. Howard became Virchand Gandhi's disciple and like Jain she practised Samayika.

Later, Virchand Gandhi went to England, where he fulfilled his desire to be a barrister but he did not use this training for monetary gain. Considering the curiosity for Jainism in England, he started a coaching class. Later he founded the *'Jain Literature Society'* in London. Herbert Warren, a religious enthusiast, abandoned non-vegetarianism and adopted the Jain religion. He took notes of Virchand Gandhi's lectures and





wrote in English a book on the Jain religion. Moreover, Charles C. Bonny, the President of the Conference of world religions, was impressed by him. At the time of the famine of 1896-97 in India, Mr. Bonny was the president of the Famine Relief Committee founded in America by Virchand Gandhi. This committee immediately sent to India forty thousand Rupees and a steamer full of corn. During this travel Virchand Gandhi delivered as many as 535 lectures. He had the command of fourteen languages including Gujarati, Hindi, Bengali, English, Sanskrit and French.

The short life span of Virchand Raghavji Gandhi is full of multifarious achievements. He was the first graduate of the Jain society to get his BA with Hons. in 1884. When his father died in 1890, he did not allow the primitive practices of wailing and breast-beating during mourning. At the age of twenty-one, as the secretary of 'Shri Jain Association of India', he worked for the abolition of poll-tax levied on pilgrims to Palitana.

Annoyed by poll-tax and other forms of harassment, the Anandji Kalyanji firm had filed a suit against the rule of Palitana. But Sursinghji, the ruler (Thakor) of Palitana, was a right-hand man of the Political Agent. Virchand Gandhi took up the problem. He met Lord Ray, the governor of Bombay, and Colonel Watson, the Political Agent and made a strong representation and eventually forced the abolition of the poll-tax. An English man set up at Mt. Sametshikhar, a place of pilgrimage in Bihar, a factory for extracting pig's fat on order. Virchand Gandhi went all the way to Calcutta to have the work on the project stopped. He stayed in Calcutta and learnt the Bengali language and did not give up his fight until he achieved his objectives and got the factory closed down. He attended the international Commerce Conference as an all-Asia delegate. As a delegate from Bombay,

he attended the Indian National Congress held at Pune in 1895. He was a strong advocate of Rashtriya Mahasabha or the congress and in intimate contact with Mahatma Gandhi. In a letter written to Virchand Gandhi's son, Gandhiji sends his blessing and asks : 'Have you adopted any ideals of your father ?'

Virchand Gandhi passed away in 1901 when he was only thirty seven.

The late Virchand Raghavji Gandhi was fondly remembered by all the people in 1983. Just hundred years before at that very time the Parliament of Religions of the world was held in Chicago in the United States of America. A library was started at Mahuwa in memory of Virchand Raghavji, just outside the premises of the library at Mahuwa and also outside the Jain Derasar at Chicago, a statue of the late Virchand Raghavji was installed.

Attempts are being made for converting the house at Mahuwa in which the late Virchand Raghavji stayed as a permanent memorial in his name. The manuscripts of the books written by the late Virchand Raghavji can be placed in that memorial. Secondly, the photographs of the Parliament of World Religions held at Chicago in 1893 can also be displayed in the house.

He fought many legal battles in India. The legal documents and records pertaining to the cases should be procured for the preservation.

Pandit Sukhalalji had suggested years before that the books written by the late Virchand Raghavji Gandhi should be translated into Gujarati. Hence attempts should be made to reprint it as early as possible.

Swami Vivekanand has travelled to America in the company of the late Virchand Gandhi. The Swami used to address him 'Oh, my dear Gandhi' in his letters. Attempts should be made to collect details of their association with each other.





## મહાન ધર્મપ્રચારક શ્રી વીરચંદ રાઘવજી ગાંધી

- જિતેન્દ્ર બી. શાહ

૧૯મી સદીમાં યુરોપના વિદ્વાનો ભારતીય સંસ્કૃતિ અને વિદ્યા પ્રતિ આકર્ષાયા હતા અને તેઓએ ભારતીય શાસ્ત્રોનો અભ્યાસ આદર્યો હતો. જેમ જેમ તેઓ ભારતીય શાસ્ત્રોમાં અભ્યાસ અને અધ્યયન કરવા લાગ્યા તેમ તેમ તેઓ ભારતીય શાસ્ત્રોની ગહનતા, વિશાળતા, ઉદારતા અને ચિંતનની પરાકાષ્ઠા જોઈને વધુ ને વધુ આકર્ષાતા ગયા હતા. ભારતીય સંસ્કૃતિના અભ્યાસ દરમ્યાન તેઓ જેન ધર્મના સંપર્કમાં પણ આવ્યા હતા અને ડૉ. હોર્નલે નામના વિદ્વાને તો જેન ધર્મના ઉવાસગ દસાંગ નામના અંગ આગમનું સંપાદન અને વિદ્વતાપૂર્ણ નોંધો તૈયાર કરી સને ૧૯૦૦ના અરસામાં ગ્રંથરૂપે પ્રકાશિત કર્યો હતો. આ ગ્રંથનું સંપાદન કરતા તેઓ પૂજ્ય આચાર્ય દેવશ્રી આત્મારામજીના સંપર્કમાં આવ્યા હતા. અને પૂ. આચાર્યશ્રીએ તેમની શંકાઓનું સમાધાન કર્યું હતું તેથી પ્રસ્તુત ગ્રંથ પૂજ્ય આત્મારામજી મ.સા.ને સમર્પિત કર્યો હતો. આમ વિદ્વત્ જગતમાં જેન ધર્મનો પ્રચાર યુરોપ સુધી વિસ્તર્યો હતો. પરંતુ સામાન્ય જનતા માટે જેન ધર્મનું નામ અને સિદ્ધાન્તો સાવ અજાણ્યા હતા.

આ અરસામાં જ (સને ૧૮૯૩માં) શિકાગોમાં પ્રથમ વિશ્વધર્મ પરિષદનું આયોજન થયું. આ પરિષદમાં જેન ધર્મના પ્રતિનિધિ તરીકે ઉપસ્થિત રહેવાનું આમંત્રણ પૂ. આત્મારામજી મ.સા.ને મળ્યું પરંતુ સમુદ્રગમન અંગેની જેન ધર્મની મર્યાદાને કારણે તેમણે તેજસ્વી યુવાન વીરચંદની પસંદગી કરી અને તેમને વિશ્વધર્મ પરિષદમાં પોતાના પ્રતિનિધિ તરીકે મોકલવાનું નક્કી કર્યું. વીરચંદનો જન્મ મહુઆ ગામમાં સં. ૧૯૨૦ (૨૫.૮.૧૮૬૪) થયો હતો. તેમના પિતાનું નામ રાઘવજી હતું. ભાવનગરમાં મેટ્રિક સુધીનો અભ્યાસ કરી વધુ અભ્યાસ માટે મુંબઈની એલ્ફિન્સ્ટન કૉલેજમાં જોડાયા. ત્યાં તેમણે બી.એ. સુધીનો અભ્યાસ કર્યો હતો. સને ૧૮૮૪માં તેઓ જેન એસોસિયેશન ઑફ ઈન્ડિયાના મંત્રી બન્યા અને અહીં તેમણે રાજકીય, ધાર્મિક અને સામાજિક સુધારાઓ અંગે અનેક ભાષણો આપ્યાં.

આમ તેઓ હવે સમાજ રાષ્ટ્ર અને ધર્મના ક્ષેત્રમાં સક્રિય બની, તેમાં વ્યાપેલી જડતા અને અંધશ્રદ્ધાને દૂર કરવા કટિબદ્ધ બન્યા હતા. તેમની પ્રવચન કરવાની શૈલી અદ્ભુત હતી. તે સમયે તીર્થાધિરાજ શત્રુંજય ઉપર કોઈએ ચરણપાદુકાઓ ઉખાડી નાંખી હતી. તે અંગે જબરો વિવાદ ઊભો થયો હતો. આ અંગે ઠાકોર સુરસિંહ સાથે થયેલી ચર્ચામાં શ્રી વીરચંદ ભાઈએ ઘણી મહેનત કરી હતી. ઠાકોર સુરસિંહની ગાદીએ આવેલ માનસિંહ સાથે શત્રુંજયતીર્થ ઉપર યાત્રિકોનો મુંડકાવેરો અટકાવી તેના બદલે દર વર્ષે રૂ. ૧૫ હજારની રકમ ૪૦ વર્ષ સુધી આપવાની બાબત નક્કી કરાવવામાં પણ શ્રી વીરચંદ રાઘવજી ગાંધીએ જબરો મહેનત કરી હતી.

સન ૧૮૯૧માં કોઈ અંગ્રેજે પવિત્ર તીર્થ સમેતશિખર ઉપર ચરબી બનાવવાનું કરખાનું સ્થાપ્યું હતું તેને કારણ સમગ્ર જેન સમાજમાં અસંતોષની લાગણી ફેલાઈ હતી. તેમ જ તેની સામે મંડાયેલ કેસ લડવાની જવાબદારી વીરચંદભાઈને સોંપવામાં આવી. તેઓ આ કેસની વિગતો મેળવવા માટે કલકત્તા ગયા. કેસની વિગતોનો સંપૂર્ણ અભ્યાસ થઈ શકે અને તમામ ઝીણીમાં ઝીણી બાબતોનો ખ્યાલ આવે તે માટે તેમણે બંગાળી ભાષાનો અભ્યાસ કરી તેના ઉપર પણ પ્રભુત્વ મેળવી લીધું હતું. આમ ખૂબ જ પરિશ્રમ લઈ કેસમાં વિજય મેળવ્યો હતો અને પવિત્ર તીર્થ ઉપર આચરવામાં આવેલ અત્યાચાર દૂર કરાવ્યો હતો.

અને ૧૮૯૩માં શિકાગોમાં પ્રથમ વિશ્વધર્મ પરિષદમાં જેન ધર્મના પ્રતિનિધિરૂપે ઉપસ્થિત રહી શ્રી વીરચંદ રાઘવજી ગાંધીએ જેન ધર્મના સિદ્ધાંતોનું અદ્ભૂત વ્યાખ્યાન આપી વિદેશી ધર્મપ્રેમીઓને સંપૂર્ણપણે અભિભૂત કરી દીધા હતા. ધર્મના સિદ્ધાંતોનું ઉંડું, સ્પષ્ટ અને તાર્કિક જ્ઞાન, અંગ્રેજી ભાષા ઉપર પ્રભુત્વ અને અદ્ભૂત વક્તૃત્વશક્તિ દ્વારા તેમણે તમામ ધર્મના અનુયાયીઓ ઉપર જેન ધર્મના સિદ્ધાંતોની ઉંડી છાપ ઉપસાવી હતી.

તેઓશ્રીએ જેન ધર્મના તત્ત્વજ્ઞાનને ખૂબ જ ઉત્તમ





રીતે રજૂ કર્યું હતું તેથી તે સમયે અમેરિકાના એક પ્રતિષ્ઠિત વર્તમાન પત્રે નોંધ્યું હતું કે પાર્લમેન્ટમાં પ્રતિષ્ઠિત હિંદુ વિદ્વાનો, તત્ત્વજ્ઞાનીઓ અને ધર્મોપદેશકોએ હાજર રહી ભાષણો આપ્યા હતા, તેમાંના કેટલાંક તો એવા હતા કે જેમની વિદ્વતા, વક્તૃત્વકલા અને ધર્મભક્તિમાં કોઈ પણ પ્રજાની ઉચ્ચમાં ઉચ્ચ વ્યક્તિઓ સાથે સમાનપદ પર મુકાય તેમ છે, પરંતુ એટલું તો નિર્ભયતાથી કહી શકાય તેમ છે કે પૌર્વાત્ય પંડિતોમાંથી જેન સમાજના યુવક ગૃહસ્થે પોતાના વર્ગની નીતિ અને તત્ત્વજ્ઞાન સંબંધી આપેલ ભાષણ શ્રોતાઓએ જે રસથી સાંભળ્યું હતું તે કરતાં વધારે રસથી કોઈ પણ પૌર્વાત્ય પંડિતનું તેમણે સાંભળ્યું ન હતું. આને લીધે પરિષદના અનેક શહેરોમાંથી જુદાં જુદાં ચર્ચ અને સંસ્થાઓ દ્વારા વ્યાખ્યાન માટેનાં આમંત્રણો મળ્યાં હતાં. તેમની ધર્મભક્તિ, અપાર શ્રદ્ધા અને જેન સિદ્ધાંતોના જ્ઞાનનું આ પરિણામ હતું. તેમણે આપેલાં વ્યાખ્યાનોથી તેમની કીર્તિ વધુ ને વધુ ફેલાતી જતી હતી. તેમને માત્ર અમેરિકામાં જ નહીં યુરોપના અનેક દેશોમાંથી પણ આમંત્રણ મળવા લાગ્યાં હતાં આમ તેમની કીર્તિ વિશ્વવ્યાપી બની ગઈ હતી. તેમણે માત્ર વ્યાખ્યાન આપવા દ્વારા જ પોતાની ઇતિશ્રી માની ન હતી. સમાજસેવા, તીર્થભક્તિ, દેશભક્તિ જેવાં અનેક કાર્યો તેમણે કર્યાં હતાં.

આથી જ તેમની સેવાઓની અંજલિ આપતા વિદ્વાન વિચારક શ્રી રતિલાલ દીપચંદ દેસાઈ જણાવે છે કે “શ્રી વીરચંદભાઈએ સમાજસેવા કરી હતી, જ્ઞાનપ્રચાર માટે પ્રયત્નો આદર્યા હતા, દેશભક્તિ દાખવી હતી, વિદ્યાની ઉપાસના કરી હતી. અને સૌથી આગળ વધીને જેનશાસનની પરદેશોમાં પ્રભાવના કરવામાં જાણે પોતાની કાયાને ઘસી નાંખી હતી. જેમ-જેમ એમની સેવાઓનો ખ્યાલ મેળવવા પ્રયત્ન કરીએ છીએ તેમ-તેમ તેમની વધુ ને વધુ વિશાળતા સમજાતી જાય છે. અને છેવટે એમ જ લાગે છે કે એમની સેવાઓનું મૂલ્ય આંકી શકાય તેમ નથી અને છતાં, આટલાટલી સેવાઓ કરનાર પુરુષને આપણે કેટલા બધા વીસરી ગયા છીએ ! આપણી આ વિસ્મરણશીલતા અને અકૃતજ્ઞતાનો વિચાર કરીએ છીએ ત્યારે ચિત્ત ગ્લાનિ અને દુઃખની લાગણીથી ભરણ જાય છે.”

અમેરિકાથી પાછા કરતાં ઇંગ્લેન્ડમાં પણ શ્રી વીરચંદભાઈએ જેન ધર્મના તત્ત્વો સંબંધી વ્યાખ્યાનમાળાનો આરંભ કર્યો. ઇંગ્લેન્ડના વતનીઓએ તેમનાં વ્યાખ્યાનો સાંભળી વધુ જિજ્ઞાસા બતાવી તેથી તેમણે ત્યાં પણ એક શિક્ષણવર્ગ ખોલ્યો. તેમાંથી ઘણા લોકો જેન ધર્મના સિદ્ધાંતો પ્રત્યે આકર્ષાયા અને તેઓ જેન ધર્મના આચારો પાળવા તત્પર બન્યા હતા. તેમાં હર્બર્ટ વોરનનું નામ ઉલ્લેખનીય છે. આ અંગ્રેજ યુવાને માંસાહારનો સર્વથા ત્યાગ કર્યો હતો અને જેન ધર્મનાં વ્રતોનું પાલન આદર્યું હતું. તેઓએ વીરચંદભાઈને હાથે ગૃહસ્થવ્રતો સ્વીકાર્યા હતાં એટલું જ નહીં જેન ધર્મના સિદ્ધાંતોને શ્રદ્ધાપૂર્વક સ્વીકરતા હતા. તેમણે Jainism નામનું પુસ્તક પણ લખ્યું છે. તે પ્રકાશિત થયું છે. આ ઉપરાંત વીરચંદભાઈએ ૧૯૦૦માં લંડનમાં ધ્યાન ઉપર ૧૨ વ્યાખ્યાનો આપ્યાં હતાં, આ વ્યાખ્યાનોની નોંધ આ અંગ્રેજ વિદ્વાને કરી હતી તે ૧૯૧૬માં પુસ્તિકારૂપે પ્રકાશિત થઈ હતી. તેનું પુનર્મુદ્રણ શારદાબહેન ચિમનભાઈ એજ્યુકેશનલ રિસર્ચ સેન્ટર, અમદાવાદથી concentration ના નામે થયેલું છે.

તેમનું અંગ્રેજીભાષા ઉપર તો જબરું પ્રભુત્વ હતું જ, શિખરજીનો કેસ લડવા માટે બંગાળી ભાષાના જાણકાર બન્યા, વિશ્વધર્મ પરિષદમાં ભાગ લેવાના નિમિત્તે સંસ્કૃત, પ્રાકૃત ભાષાના જાણકાર બન્યા, ગુજરાતી તો માતૃભાષા જ હતી પણ સાથે સાથે તેઓ બીજી પણ ભાષા જાણતા હતા તેમાં ફ્રેંચ ભાષાનો ઉલ્લેખ કરી શકાય તેઓએ ૧૮૯૪માં શિકાગોમાં જ ફ્રેંચ ભાષામાં લખાયેલ જીસસના જીવન વિષય ઉપરના પુસ્તકનો ઇંગ્લીશમાં અનુવાદ કર્યો છે. જેમા તેમણે વિદ્વતાપૂર્ણ પ્રસ્તાવના લખી પુસ્તકની ઉપયોગીતામાં વધારો કર્યો છે. શુભચંદ્રના જ્ઞાનાર્ણવનો સર્વીર્યધ્યાન પ્રકરણનો ગુજરાતીમાં અનુવાદ કર્યો છે. ભારતીય દર્શન ઉપર અંગ્રેજીમાં પુસ્તક લખ્યું છે અને તેમના પ્રવચનોનું ત્રણ પુસ્તકો કર્મ સિદ્ધાંત, યોગ સિદ્ધાંત અને જેન સિદ્ધાંત અંગ્રેજીમાં પ્રકાશિત થયા છે.

આમ તેમની વિદ્વતા, પ્રભાવનકર્તા અને જેન ધર્મ પ્રત્યેની નિષ્ઠા અદ્ભૂત હતી. તેમના કાર્યોથી જેન જગત સદાય ઋણી રહેશે.





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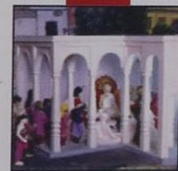
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Any religion that is not based on respect for life is not a true religion until he extends his circle of compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.

- Albert Schweitzer

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