



Transmitting Jainism through U.S. *Pāṭhaśāla* Temple Education Part 1: Implicit Goals, Curriculum as “Text,” and the Authority of Teachers, Family, and Self

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Abstract

In this first of two articles, I offer a summary description of results from a 2017 nationwide survey of Jain students and teachers involved in *pāṭha-śāla* (hereafter “pathshala”) temple education in the United States. In these two essays, I provide a descriptive overview of the considerable data derived from this 178-question survey, noting trends and themes that emerge therein, in order to provide a broad orientation before narrowing my scope in subsequent analyses. In Part 1, I describe Jain pathshala, from its Indian roots to the U.S. context, where sect-identity and mendicant authority have considerably less influence than in the subcontinent. I explore three research questions in relation to U.S. pathshala: (1) What is the goal of pathshala?; (2) What is the role of texts (such as *sūtras* or scriptures) in pathshala?; and (3) What is/are the current sources of authority in pathshala?

Key words: Jainism, pathshala, Jain education, pedagogy, Jain diaspora, Jainism and authority, Jains in the United States, Jainism and textual authority, second- and third-generation Jains, Young Jains of America, Jain orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy, Jain social engagement, Jainism and modernity, sect identity, Jain ritual

Introduction

Pāṭha-śāla (hereafter “pathshala”) is a Sanskrit term meaning “house of learning.” In the context of India, pathshala evokes an image of people gathered under a shaded tree in the fresh air to listen to a learned teacher. Pathshala can be religious, such as a school for children to learn Vedic chanting from Brahmin priests, or secular. For example, the Pathshala South Asian Media Institute in Bangladesh is a training center for socially-engaged photojournalism.

In the Jain tradition, pathshala refers to any kind of education that perpetuates Jain values. In India, this education could take place in mendicant lodgings (*upāśraya* or *sthānak*¹), where a monk or nun offers lessons (*pravācana*) in a teaching hall (Glazenapp 1999, 439), especially during the four-month long rainy season (*cāturmāsa*) when monks shelter for several weeks (Folkert 1993, 167-174).² Conversely, sociologist Vilas Sangave describes the development of community-run pathshalas, as “indigenous schools” that passed on Jain knowledge in vernacular languages with little input from mendicants (2001, 76). In either case, pathshalas provided a forum for passing on the essential elements of a shared Jain worldview, including the *tattvas* and ethical teachings of *ahimsā* (Flügel 2005, 5-6). Pathshalas also offered a forum for sect- (*sampradāya*) or lineage (*gaccha*)-specific transmissions, such as reformers attempting to win lay Jains over to their alternate view, and for local communities perpetuating distinct regional, sect, and community rituals and practices (Dundas 2002, 45-51). While many lay Jains eagerly adopted secular education in the early twentieth-century, they retained the religious institution of pathshala to maintain and perpetuate Jain identity and praxis among lay people (Flügel 2005, 6; Sangave 2001, 76).

¹ See Dundas 2002, 252 for a summary of various forms of sect-specific housing. See also, fn 2.

² Although mendicants are often described as continuously wandering in the earliest canonical texts, a closer analysis reveals a tendency for some monks to be “temple-dwellers,” (*caityavāsin*) beginning in the 4th century CE or earlier (Dundas 2002, 136; Babb 1996, 114; Folkert 1993, 167-181).

In the United States, pathshala transmits Jain ideals among immigrants who no longer have access to fully-initiated mendicants, and who are largely separated from regional, linguistic, and sect-specific communities. In this analysis—Part 1 of 2—I examine the institution of pathshala education in the United States based on a 2017 nationwide survey I conducted with Jain pathshala students and teachers. In this two-part summary, I provide a descriptive overview of the considerable data derived from this 178-question survey, noting trends and themes that emerge therein, in order to provide a broad orientation before narrowing my scope in subsequent analyses. In Part 1, I explore three research questions in the U.S. context: (1) What are the goals of pathshala?; (2) What is the role of texts (such as *sūtras* or scriptures) in pathshala?; and (3) What is/are the current sources of authority in pathshala?

After providing contextual information on Jain history, worldview, the relation between mendicants and lay Jains, and the context of U.S. pathshala, I describe the survey methodology, demographics, and strengths and weaknesses of the data set. I then make four assertions. First, that the goals of pathshala are implicit and are associated with four concepts that are of varying importance to respondents, namely: (1) knowing Jain values, (2) acting out Jain values (3) context-specific challenges, and (4) preserving cultural connections to India. Second, that the JAINA curriculum “blue books” function as the primary text for U.S. pathshalas and are more accessible and utilized than any Jain canonical texts. Third, that family members and pathshala teachers are seen as primary transmitters of the Jain tradition, more than any specific texts, suggesting a strongly oral mode of transmission, even in the absence of monks and nuns. Finally, self-motivated learning plays a significant role for students and teachers, expressed through a strong commitment to independent reasoning and critical thinking to evaluate the claims of the Jain tradition as well as the claims of modern society. Aligned with the emphasis on independent

reasoning, pathshala teachers are widely perceived as open to discussing challenging or controversial social issues, and this quality—along with an energetic attitude and a willingness to explore the practical challenges of being a Jain—is deemed more important than whether or not a teacher was born in the same culture or a teacher’s actual knowledge of the tradition.

Jainism: A Community of Mendicants and Laity

Jainism has been largely defined since the 5th century BCE by the extreme austerities of its mendicant community. This small but culturally influential group of “houseless” monks and nuns withdrew from society, career, family roles, homes, personal belongings, and even mechanical conveyance—all the trappings of identity and worldly success—to follow the five great vows (*mahā-vratas*) exemplified by Mahāvīra, the “great hero” (5th century BCE³), who was an elder contemporary of the Buddha, and considered to be the last of twenty-four liberated teachers, called *Jinas* or *tīrthaṅkaras*, in the present time cycle.

The first and central of these great vows is *ahiṃsā*, or nonviolence in one’s thought patterns, physical actions, and speech toward all life forms, including microorganisms, insects, fish, birds, mammals, and people. Jain mendicants permit neither voluntary harm nor the carelessness that could result in accidental harm. They require regular rituals of repentance to any living being affected by their existence. This vow of non-harm is followed by four others: (1) speaking truth (*satya*), (2) taking nothing that has not been given, including food (*asteya*), (3) giving up attachment to material possessions and ego (*aparigraha*), and (4) sexual celibacy (*brahmacarya*). By emulating the twenty-four *Jinas*, mendicants consider themselves on the path to eventual liberation (*mokṣa-mārgaḥ*). On this path of exertion, mendicants strive (*śramaṇa*) to

³ Some sources place Mahāvīra’s life one hundred years earlier in the 6th century BCE; I am following the 5th century date, in keeping with the revised later dating of the Buddha (Dundas 2002, 24).

control the vacillations, desires and aversions of their minds, body, and speech and to eventually free themselves from the heavy webs of karma that bind all living beings. They do this by adhering to detailed ethical rules on how to solicit and ingest food, manage hygiene and excretion, minimize speech, movement (only foot conveyance is permitted), and dress. In fact, the two dominant sects of the tradition are named for the clothing of their mendicants: the *Śvetāmbara*, or white clad, monks and nuns wear only a white fabric; the *Digambara*, or sky clad, monks wear no clothing at all, and thus, is a path of liberation available only to males, for whom public nudity is acceptable. In addition to these two dominant sects, other lineages called *gacchas* have also split off, resulting in a diverse Jain community in India—though significantly unified in its minority status and commitment to vows—that has been marked by particular differences in belief or ritual practice, differences ultimately linked to the complexities of mendicant life.

Unlike the mendicants, lay Jains participate in work, home life, and families. Lay Jains are characterized as those who take small vows (*aṇu-vratas*), or a weaker version of the great vows practiced by mendicants. However, as scholars have noted, lay Jains rarely take these vows under the formal direction of a monk or nun as prescribed in early texts devoted to the practices of lay life (Jaini 2001, 160; Laidlaw 1995, 173-175; Dundas 2002, 189-191). For most Jains, the five vows offer an orientation toward daily life—sometimes called the “Jain Way of Life”—that cultivates certain habits of mind, buying practices, or dietary rules such as vegetarianism, though some may regularly or occasionally take more stringent vows, including fasting or meditation.

Lay Jains may also have differences in ritual orientation. While the two *Śvetāmbara gacchas* (*Stānakavāsi* and *Terāpanthī*), for example, permit only mental veneration (*bhava-pūjā*) of the

Jinas, another Śvetāmbara *gaccha* (Mūrtipūjaka, also called Derāvāsī or Mandir Mārgī) views material worship (*dravya-pūjā*) of *Jina* statues (*mūrtis*) as a core aspect of temple life.

As mentioned above, pathshalas in India transmit these diverse expressions of the “Jain Way of Life” to future generations through mutual support of and education by mendicants, and through lay communities perpetuating *sūtras*, rituals, or practices unique to a particular region or lineage.

Pathshala in the U.S. Jain Context

In the United States, pathshala emerged to serve the needs of immigrant Jains who no longer had access to fully ordained mendicants.⁴ In the U.S., no self-perpetuating Jain community existed until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that abolished quotas that had previously limited the number of Asian immigrants. This act also prioritized professional skills and family reunification (Williams 2000, 213). Lay Jains, many of whom were members of the merchant caste in India and who gravitated toward certain “nonviolent” jobs such as engineering, medicine, and banking, were well suited for these new criteria.⁵

In the early years of immigration to the U.S. after 1965, home temples served as places of worship and sites for social gathering. Some communities joined up with ecumenical Hindu temples to have Jain *mūrtis* installed, for instance, the Hindu-Jain temples in Monroeville, Pennsylvania and Baltimore, Maryland.⁶ The first Jain Center opened in 1966 in New York. By the 1980s, the Jain community was sufficiently well established in urban centers of North

⁴ Although mendicants are not permitted to travel by mechanical conveyance, the head of the Terapanthī sect Ācārya Tulsī initiated a small intermediate class of novice mendicants known as *saman* (male) and *samanī* (female) in 1980 who can travel abroad for study and service (see description of Jain Viswa Bharati in this section). Additionally, two former Jain monks—Satish Kumar (b. 1936) and Chitrabahnu (1922-2019) gave up their mendicant vows to expand their outreach abroad. Both received considerable support among diaspora lay Jains in Europe and North America respectively.

⁵ Williams provides the Śvetāmbara list of lay occupations in a hierarchy of desirability as: trade, practice of medicine, agriculture, artisanal crafts, animal husbandry, service of a ruler, and begging. The Digambara list includes: trade, clerical occupations, agriculture, artisanal crafts, and military occupations (1991, 122).

⁶ For an example of a Hindu-Jain temple event, see Long, *Jainism: An Introduction*, p. 4-13.

America to justify the creation of its own societies and temples. For example, the Jain Society of Houston, where I live, was formed in 1982, and now serves over eight hundred families from both of the main sects as well as from distinct lineages. Jain Vishva Bharati (JVB)⁷ is a second temple community in Houston, started in 1999. JVB centers provide a unique ecumenical space for diaspora Jains and the wider Indian community centered on Prekṣā Dhyāna, a form of meditational and postural yoga created by Terapanthī monk Mahāprajña in the 1970s (Jain 2016, 236-237). As part of multiple reforms aimed at increasing social engagement among lay Jains, the head of the Terapanthī sect Ācārya Tulsī initiated an intermediate class of mendicants known as *samaṇ* (male) and *samaṇī* (female) to disseminate Prekṣā Dhyāna internationally to help address modern conflicts at the personal and global scale (236). Novice mendicants follow less stringent rules than their fully initiated counterparts, for example, using mechanical transportation to spread the practice of Prekṣā Dhyāna in India and abroad, and developing long-term relationships with lay people (231). JVB centers offer their own education programs for Jains and non-Jains, often with various modes of Prekṣā Dhyāna as a central element.

Regular pathshala classes started in U.S. temples in the 1980s to teach young Jains about their tradition. Unlike in India, where multiple temples were woven into the fabric of neighborhoods and daily life, U.S. pathshala was tailored to suit the new context. As Diana Eck explains in her research on Hindu diaspora communities, “Pathshala is part of American identity and American expectations of temple building, electing officers, fundraising administration, work week, and ‘weekend’ religious school” (2000, 231). Similarly, Jain pathshala is often set up much like a Protestant Sunday school, with most classes meeting weekly or bi-weekly. The institutionalization of Jainism was further established through the founding of JAINA, or the

⁷ Sanskrit: *Viśva* (the earth universally) *Bhārati* (India) meaning the unity of the world with India.

Federation of Jain Associations in North America, in 1981 to serve as an umbrella organization uniting Jains in the U.S. and Canada “irrespective of their languages, regions, and traditions” around a biennial convention, social and professional networks, community publications, and education. JAINA estimates that there are 150,000 Jains in North America at present (JAINA). This figure is difficult to confirm, since the U.S. Census does not ask about Jainism in its religion section. However, a 2012 Pew Research Center report (“Religious”) calculated Jains as accounting for two percent of the Indian-American population, which was just under 3.5 million according to 2016 census estimates, resulting in a U.S. Jain population of approximately 70,000 (ACS Demographic 2016). Many estimates place the U.S. Jain population between these two figures, near 100,000 (Lee 2010, 487-488).

In 1992, Dr. Premchand Gada of Lubbock, Texas founded the JAINA Educational Committee. Utilizing materials compiled by Gada, the committee designed a four-level series of pathshala curriculum books—from elementary to college level—which were published in 1995 and 1997. In 2001, Pravin Shah, an engineer from North Carolina, took over as Chair of the JAINA Educational Committee, a position he still holds. With a committee composed of pathshala teachers, Shah began to synthesize national feedback on the early editions of the curriculum, primarily normalizing Sanskrit and Prākṛit terms, improving English grammar, and addressing sectarian differences. The revised editions underwent several editing processes by teachers of both Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects before being sent to two monks in India for a final check. As evidence of the ongoing textual production of North American Jains, the third edition of the JAINA pathshala curriculum includes eleven JAINA Education Series Pathshala (JES) “blue books,” two of which were only just published in September 2018, as well as six

additional reference books, all available at very low cost to temples or free in downloadable online format from the Jain E-library, another of Shah's projects (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 Sample of JAINA Education Series Pathshala (JES) “blue books” and additional reference books

The JAINA educational committee states that presently there are approximately four thousand students and four hundred teachers at U.S. pathshalas (Shah 2017). Although not every pathshala uses the JES blue books, the large majority of them do. The twelve largest temple pathshala programs in the U.S. are as follows:

Region	No. of students	No. of teachers
Chicago	485	40
So. California	420	100
New Jersey	400	40
North. Calif.	375	42
North Texas	280	20
Houston	225	42
New York	150	15
Atlanta	140	30
Wash. D.C.	135	35
New Jersey	125	33
Phoenix	120	12
Boston	110	13

Table 1.1 Twelve largest pathshala programs, by region, in the United States, 2017 (Shah 2017b)

Methodology

Motivated by questions of how pathshala perpetuates Jain identity in transnational contexts, I designed a survey titled, “Transmitting Identity through Pathshala Temple Education Among U.S. Jains.” Although valuable scholarship exists that examines Jains in diaspora (Banks 1991, Kumar 1996, Valley 2008, Jain 2011, Radford 2004, Shah et al. 2011), and even the mechanisms of adaptation among Jain youth (Mehta 2017, Valley 2004, Shah 2014 and 2017, Vekemans 2014), there has been little examination of pathshala itself, with only one doctoral candidate currently undertaking a comparative study of pathshalas in India and the United States.⁸

From October 2016 through January 2017, I vetted the survey with groups of pathshala students (aged fourteen and above) and separate groups of pathshala teachers within the Jain

⁸ Shivani Bothra, at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, conducted field research interviews at U.S. pathshalas in 2015 and subsequently in India, where pathshalas are proliferating. Bothra defended her Ph.D. dissertation in late 2018. Anne Valley also observed some pathshala classes in Toronto, Canada as part of her research into the social-ecological ethos of diaspora Jainism in North America (2008).

temples of Houston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The age of fourteen was established through conversations with pathshala teachers, as this age was the general cut-off for participation in high school pathshala classes. Each focus group lasted for seventy-five minutes and involved participants reviewing the survey questions aloud, with the following prompts printed on sheets for their consideration:

- Change a question for accuracy
- Change a question to make it more interesting
- Add a question that is missing
- (or consider) What would you want to ask if you could ask a Jain student or teacher anything?

I also vetted the survey through Skype and email correspondence with board members of Young Jains of America. These focus groups were especially valuable when selecting terms that would cause the least confusion between temples, e.g. using “scripture” rather than “texts” when referring to specific ancient Jain *sūtras*, or identifying overlooked complexities in diaspora relational networks, for example by adding “a respected elder” to the list of possible people who transmit information related to Jain history, ritual, and ethics. The final survey consisted of 178 multiple-choice and open-ended questions located on the Qualtrics digital platform of Rice University.

In May 2017, I contacted approximately one hundred pathshala coordinators at seventy-three Jain centers across the United States by both phone and email after having received the list of centers and coordinators from Pravin Shah, the Chair of the JAINA Education Committee. I also contacted the individual students and teachers who had participated in the earlier focus groups, as I had collected their email addresses during our sessions. Each email contained a brief description of the research project, including a two-minute introductory video⁹, and a link for the

⁹ Pathshala Survey Introduction by Brianne Donaldson (video), April 2, 2017 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nC0i5kKCB0g&feature=youtu.be>

survey. The informed consent form for adults was embedded in the survey, as were the parental consent and participant assent forms for students under 18 years old. Young Jains of America also placed a link to the survey on their website. In the email, I asked teachers to have their students complete the survey in class if possible, and to take the survey themselves. I also issued follow-up emails and calls. The full survey can be viewed as Appendix A to this article. The survey was open from May-July 2017.

Demographics

The total number of respondents was 178. Of these, 59 completed less than 10% of the survey (namely, the demographics), and their responses were discarded from the data set, leaving a total of 119 participants. Fifty-six were students (36 current and 20 former) and 63 were teachers (37 current and 26 former). 119 respondents completed at least 10% of the survey; 92 completed at least 36%; 76 completed at least 69%; and 69 completed 100% of the survey (22 students and 47 teachers). Additionally, 35% of teachers also reported attending pathshala as students in the U.S., many of them for more than five years: 5-7 years (15%), 7-10 years (16%) and 10 years or more (62%). Approximately 60% of teachers have taught for between 2-5 years, and 29% have taught for six years or more.

Pathshalas meet according to various schedules. Respondents reported meeting:

- every week, year round (4%, n=102)
- every week when school was in session (24%)
- every two weeks, year round (29%)
- every two weeks when school was in session (23%)
- monthly (20%)

Only one participant reported teaching at an online pathshala. In the U.S., the majority of survey respondents attended pathshala in a temple setting (61%, n=102), while some attended in a

private home (25%) or in both types of environment (10%). One pathshala used facilities at a local college to hold its classes.

The gender makeup of participants was: male (46); female (72); and neither (1). The age breakdown was as follows:

14-17	41
18-23	18
24-29	4
30-39	15
40-49	20
50-59	9
60-69	6
70-79	6
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Total	119

Respondents were born within the U.S. (51%, n=119) and outside the U.S. (49%).¹⁰ Their education levels were as follows:

Middle school	3
High school	41
High school diploma	6
Four-year college	33
Master's Degree	28
MD	6
PhD	1

Weaknesses and Strengths of the Survey

The survey reflects the bias of those who are involved in the Jain pathshala as past or current students and teachers. Additionally, many students (S) and teachers (T) had participated in Jain Academic Bowl, a nationwide competition for students who have studied the pathshala curriculum (S 29%, n=51; T 22%, n=49). Several individuals had also served in leadership positions for Young Jains of America, for example, as local representatives, or as members of the

¹⁰ Of those born outside the U.S., most were born in India (93%). Others were born in Zambia (1.7%), Uganda (1.7%), Kenya (1.7%) and the United Arab Emirates (1.7%).

executive board or convention committee (S 45%; T 29%). Consequently, this data reflects a population that is already invested to various degrees in Jain education and social leadership, an as such it is not necessarily indicative of the U.S. Jain community as a whole.

The considerable length of the survey resulted in lower numbers of respondents for the latter questions, especially among students. Fifty-six students completed at least 16% of the survey; 34 completed 36%, 26 completed 69%, and 22 completed 100%. This constitutes a fraction of the total pathshala student population as reported by JAINA (4,000 students), although the survey targeted only students in the 14+ age group. The lower numbers of students are somewhat offset by the fact that many teachers have also attended pathshala as students in India (T 57%, n=49) and the United States (35%), allowing them to contribute to the survey from their experiences as both students and teachers.

The sample size for teachers is a considerably more significant portion of the total teacher pool. Fifty-nine teachers completed 36% of the survey; 44 completed 69% of the survey, and 42 completed 100% of the survey, representing between 10.5 and 14.75% of the overall population of four hundred instructors reported by JAINA. The insights offered by teachers constitute a strong baseline for this and future analyses.

A note on diacritics: Since most U.S. Jains transliterate Sanskrit and Prākṛit terms without diacritics, I followed this convention in the survey. Survey participants also did not use diacritics in their open-ended answers, which I have normalized only for spelling and/or clarity. Thus, within this paper, I will utilize diacritics in my explanatory sections, but any questions or answers within the survey will not include them. After the first use of “pāṭhaśāla” in the title and introduction, I write “pathshala” without diacritics.

Goals of Pathshala

One of the obvious, if sometimes unstated, goals of any form of religious education is to attract a community of participants that values the experience of learning. The majority of participants, both students (S) and teachers (T), felt that pathshala was extremely important (S 71%, n=34; 92% T; n=49) with the remainder feeling it was somewhat important (S 21%; T 8%) or having a neutral opinion (S 6%). Many survey participants also expressed a desire to attend pathshala. When presented with the statement, “If I had my absolute free choice,” the majority of teachers and a significant minority of students responded that: “I would regularly go to pathshala” (S 35%, n=51; T 63%, n=49;). Other possible answers included: “I would occasionally go to pathshala” (S 35%; T 14%) and “I would not go” (S 22%; T 19%). The majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: “I enjoy attending pathshala” (S 82%; n=51; T 100%; n=49).

Generally speaking, the goal of pathshala is to transmit Jain values to children raised in Jain families. In India, this education has frequently been taught in sect-specific temples, shaped by the surrounding geographic culture, and taught by family members, teachers, and traveling mendicants. In the U.S. context, when asked to describe the “the primary goal/s of pathshala classes as I understand them,” those participants who answered this open-ended question (n=48; S 12, T 36) offered responses that are associated with four themes, each of which has varying degrees of importance to respondents: (1) *knowing Jain values*, meaning the general transmission of knowledge or values (25%), (2) *acting out Jain values*, meaning teaching Jainism as a daily mode of living (46%), (3) *context-specific challenges* of translating the tradition for Jains living in the U.S. (19%), and (4) *preserving cultural connections to India* by building a (non-sectarian) community and Jain cultural knowledge (23%). I will address each of these responses in turn.

Knowing Jain Values

Approximately one-quarter of respondents who answered the question concerning “The primary goal/s of pathshala classes, as I understand them” (S 17%; n=12; T 28%, n=36) described the aims of pathshala in terms of passing on the values and/or philosophy of the tradition in a general sense. Answers in this category included:

- to teach us about Jain philosophy
- to encourage youth to think about Jain values
- to discuss Jain values
- to create a foundation
- to learn about our religion
- to pass on Jain values
- to give kids religious values
- to learn Jainism
- to learn/teach Jain principles
- to teach Jainism
- to teach Jain principles

Acting Out Jain Values

The highest number of respondents (S 58%, n=12; T 28%, n=36) described the goals of U.S. pathshala as teaching Jainism as a tradition that must be lived out, and not merely understood through its knowledge and philosophy. It is feasible that many respondents included action as an integral aspect of “knowing” Jain values, though this was not made explicit.

In many ways, Jainism as a “way of life” is reflective of the tradition’s history as a *śramaṇic*, or “striver,” community that emphasizes the pursuit of the three jewels (*ratna-traya*) of right perception, knowledge, and action within the karmic path of all living beings. In the context of ancient India, the *śramaṇic* path was open to all who could pursue an austere path of non-harm as an alternative to the priestly path of Vedic ritual performance, which was available only to a select few.

Scholars have pointed out, however, that the five great vows of Jainism are typically practiced by mendicants through renunciation rather than through social engagement (Dundas 2002, 103; Cort 2002, 70). Certain early canonical texts also criticized householders for their lack of restraint,¹¹ leading one scholar to identify the orthodox Jain goal as an “ethic of quarantine” (Laidlaw 1995, 153). Yet, from the medieval period, the canon also includes a tradition of positive compassion that has informed both mendicant and lay practice (Wiley 2006).

Thus, the community of lay Jains has historically been characterized by a persistent tension—or perhaps a pursuit of balance—between applied practice and virtuous restraint. In addition to the five main vows, lay Jains are prescribed three supplementary vows (*guṇa-vratas*) and four spiritual disciplines (*śīkṣā-vratas*) to address daily harm in movement, occupations, feeding mendicants, and meditational practices, among other aspects unique to a lay context (Williams 1991, 55-64).¹² Diaspora scholars have especially noted how young Jains living abroad interpret the Jain commitment to nonviolence not only personally, but also socially and ecologically (Vallely 2002b, Otterbine 2014, Shah 2014, Evans 2014).

Survey respondents who understand the goals of pathshala as transmitting *a mode of living* or *applied practice* describe this aspect in the following terms (S 58%, n=12; T 28%, n=36):

- to teach young and old about the way we live and why, and what our goals are as Jain¹³
- to help us live the Jain way
- to encourage students to recognize the value of being Jain and to implement beliefs in daily life
- to teach the fundamental practice of Jainism and how to apply it
- to apply the Jain way of life

¹¹ For example, in one of the earliest canonical texts the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga-sūtra* (approximately 3rd – 1st centuries BCE) states, “householders are killers (of beings) and acquirers of property . . . They themselves kill movable and immovable living beings, have them killed by another person, or consent to another’s killing them” (2.1.43).

¹² Beyond these seven supplementary vows, lay Jains have the opportunity, though not the requirement, to take the vow of *sallekhanā*—or a voluntary fast to death—at the end of their lives. See Williams 1991, 166-171.

¹³ I have made small changes to these sentences to standardize the grammar and make the parts of speech consistent. Beyond these minor alterations, the sentences—here and throughout the Part 1 and Part 2 analyses—reflect the direct responses of participants.

- to help practice modern Jainism
- to learn how to live a Jain way of life and why we do the things we do
- to teach our kids [the] Jain way of life and continue the tradition for generations to come
- to gain correct knowledge of Jainism and then practice by applying that knowledge
- to learn the philosophy and practice of the Jain way of living
- to learn Jainism principles and ethics and apply them in daily life
- to learn how to lead harmonious life with all beings
- to be a better human being by treating all living beings equally
- to live a Jain way of life
- to learn the Jain lifestyle
- a way of life
- to teach Jainism both as a way of life and religion; to develop the spiritual personality of a child

Within the emphasis on applied action, respondents expressed a distinct concern for living beings beyond the human community, which is a hallmark of the Jain worldview that posits a universe populated by infinite beings, each enlivened by a core life force (*jīva*) transmigrating through various birth forms across multiple lifetimes. One's existence in this dynamic world requires the use and injury of other living beings, a trespass that results in the tangible accumulation of karma that further binds the *jīva* in habits of thoughts and actions that generate harm to self and others. As I will discuss more in Part 2 of this analysis, the unique Jain vegetarian diet is a significant aspect of expressing one's Jain identity on a daily basis in diaspora. Survey respondents credited pathshala as a significant source of learning about Jain food practices (S 86%, n=22; T 88%, n=42). The Jain way of life is characterized by increasing one's understanding of one's self amidst a multiplicity of living beings, and engaging in practices that steadily dial down one's harmful thoughts, words, and deeds.

Navigating Context-Specific Challenges

A significant minority of respondents (S 17%, n=12; T 19%, n=36) described the goals of pathshala as a transmission that is specific to the U.S. context. In a 2017 article in the *The South*

Asian Times titled “Pathshala: The Next Generation of American Jains,” JAINA Education Committee Chair Pravin Shah states a number of contextual challenges which the JAINA curriculum is designed to address among U.S. Jains. “Compared to India,” he writes:

the environment for American Jains is religiously dilute. Jains here are spread too thinly to offer our youth a conducive Jain environment necessary to sustain the Jain way of life. Also, the accessible resources are replaced by formidable barriers of distance, culture, language and surroundings. (Shah 2017a)

Survey respondents described the role of pathshala as making the tradition relevant and easily understood to Jains born in the United States, and/or Jain householders navigating their educational and professional tasks in the non-Jain context of the U.S. These context-specific responses were also designated through mention of the minority status of the tradition, and/or the need for each Jain to develop independent reasoning as both a Jain and a member of U.S. society.

Answers in this category included:

- to make Jainism relevant for children
- to create a safe space to learn and question Jainism
- to teach the Jain curriculum in a way that is age appropriate and standardized
- to learn how to live in the USA while trying to practice religious values to the utmost and when something disagreeable happens; to understand the karma at work
- to teach Jainism to youth and pass on the heritage in a primarily non-Jain, primarily non-Indian society
- to teach Jain values to children growing up here
- to impart Jain values and allow students to develop their own understanding of Jainism
- to explain principles and practices in simple language
- to teach students how to live their lives in America under the framework of Jainism

Shah echoes the emphasis on independent reasoning as an adaptation of U.S. pathshala among students who question inherited beliefs and practices: “Proper explanation is needed with reasons [that] must appeal to our common sense. It is for [the] WHY-generation [of] Jains” (2017a).

Preserving Cultural Connections to India

Sect Identity

Respondents in the overall survey represent diverse Jain sects and subsects with distinct ties to the history, geography, and pluralism of India. The majority of participants (65%, n=142¹⁴) come from the Śvetāmbara tradition, with the following subsects (diacritics removed for survey): Mandir Margi (66%), Sthanakvasi (26%), Bais Sampraday (3%), Terapanthi (5%). The minority are Digambara (15%), with the following subsects: Bispanthi (32%) and Terapanthi (68%). Approximately 7% did not know their sect,¹⁵ and 6% also considered themselves part of the Śrīmad Rājacandra community.¹⁶ However, respondents diverged on how important they felt their sect identity was, ranging from very important (11%; n=119), important (21%), and neutral (22%), to unimportant (21%). The largest percentage of respondents believed that sect was “an unhelpful label that separates the Jain community unnecessarily” (27%).

These diverse views concerning the importance of sect (or subsect) raise questions as to whether the future of diaspora Jainism will split along sect lines, obliterate sect distinctions, or continue to permit multiple sect and subsect identities to flourish. Jain temples in the U.S. have historically been multi-sectarian insofar as they include practices and perspectives of diverse sects and subsects from distinct regions and language centers throughout India in one temple community. Consequently, each temple enables transnational expressions of what Hindu

¹⁴Although we only counted the response of 119 individual participants for this question, there were 142 distinct responses, since some respondents chose more than one answer. For example, 19 people chose more than one sect, such as those who identified as part of the Śrīmad Rājacandra community who also identified with another sect. Five respondents chose a sect identity as well as the response: “I don’t know.”

¹⁵As noted in the previous footnote, five respondents chose a sect identity as well as the response: “I don’t know.” These are not counted in the fourteen responses in which “I don’t know” was the only answer provided.

¹⁶Śrīmad Rājacandra (1867-1901) was a Jain mystic and reformer known for his powers of memory and concentration. He offered a non-sectarian vision of the Jain tradition with special emphasis on the experiencing the full capacity of the soul (*jīva*) through meditation. He is known for his long-term correspondence with Gandhi, and his letters and books form the foundation for an independent spiritual movement among global Jains. See Salter, 2006 for an analysis of the contemporary Rājacandra community.

diaspora scholar Joanne Punzo Waghorne calls “globalized localism,” meaning the “globalization of more localized temple traditions” (2004, 172-173). U.S. temples often feature sect-specific *mūrtis* for Digambara and Śvetāmbara guests in the same space, allow personal and group rituals in regional languages, and maintain parallel calendars for sect-specific holidays and rituals.

Some temples, such as the Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago or the Jain Society of Dallas have moved toward clearer sect divisions by developing distinct temple areas for Digambara and Śvetāmbara communities on the same property in order to accommodate spiritual diversity in more discrete ways while still enabling combined educational and community-based activities to take place.

Respondents who described sect as an “unhelpful label” suggest that a non-sectarian Jainism—perhaps akin to the universal message of the 19th-century reformer and mystic Śrīmad Rājacandra’s emphasis on the individual Self or Soul¹⁷—may minimize the localized sect traditions that have characterized diaspora Jains to this point. However, as Bindi Shah points out in her analysis of Jain institutions in the U.S. and U.K., sect identities play many roles for Jains that extend beyond temple rituals to include the domains of business connections, caste relations, marriage partnerships, and language classes, among others, although the emphasis tends to be stronger in the U.K. than in the U.S. (Shah 2017).

Two temple communities in Houston exemplify these varied approaches to sect identity. The Jain Society of Houston is a multi-sect temple serving a large population of Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka Jains from the state of Gujarat alongside a Digambara minority. Jain Vishva Bharati is centered on the Terapanthī Śvetāmbara tradition of Prekṣā Dhyāna meditation

¹⁷ See fn. 16.

(described above). The former demonstrates a multi-sectarian approach, though one that implicitly favors the needs of its Śvetāmbara majority; the latter offers a unique sect-specific approach with a *universal* message of Jain practice through Prekṣā Dhyāna. Neither of these is truly non-sectarian, though the role of sect is different in each. As communities grow, it is feasible that Jains will further divide into sect-oriented temples, though it is not clear what role pathshala might play in supporting or rejecting this possibility.

While Pravin Shah describes the goal of the JAINA Education Committee as being “to prepare and publish *non-sectarian* Jain Educational material for children, youth, and young Jain professionals raised in [the] North American cultural environment . . . ,” the blue books actually include primary sect distinctions while avoiding *subsect* differences (2017a; emphasis added). The Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects are described in the teaching materials, including divergent rituals, texts, beliefs and frequently-used *sūtras* (Figure 1.3). At a 2018 workshop for pathshala educators conducted by Pravin Shah in Dallas, Texas that I attended, participants discussed how they address sect-specific challenges. One teacher explained how, in order to avoid creating conflicts with parents who may practice inherited modes of ritual unique to their sect, subsect, or cultural community in India, teachers instruct students how to say certain ritual words, along with their meaning, but leave it to the parents to teach the actual ritual.¹⁸

¹⁸ Participant observation at Jain Pathshala Workshop #5, hosted by Pravin Shah, Chair of the JAINA Education Committee, at Jain Society of North Texas, Dallas. July 20-22, 2018.

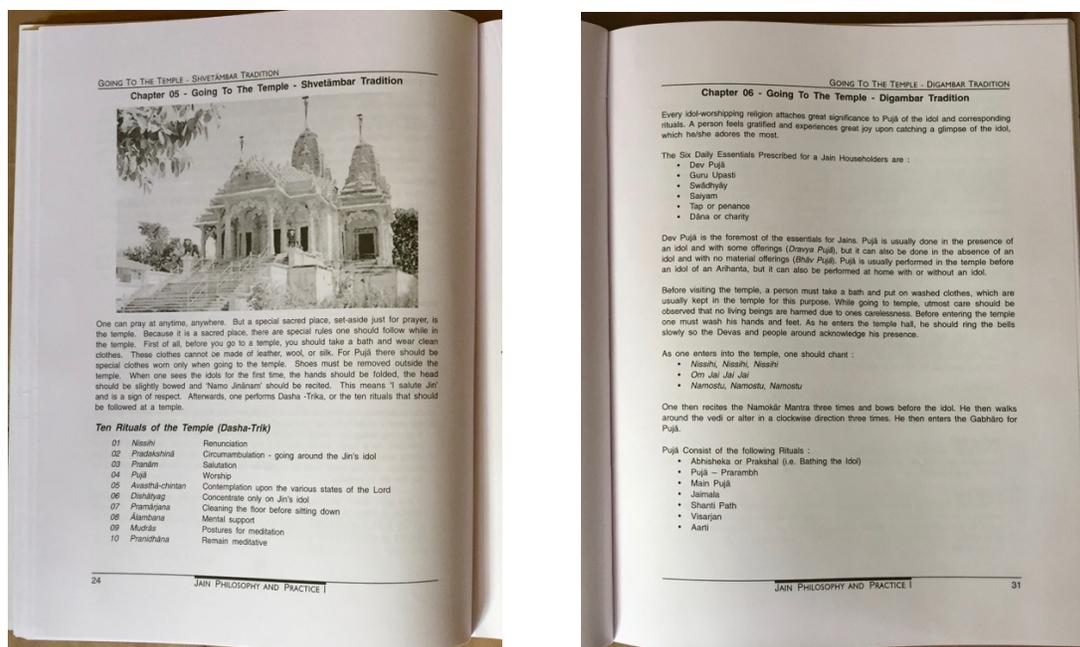


Figure 1.2 *JES 302 Jain Philosophy and Practice-1*, p. 24-31: Chapters Five and Six address the various temple practices of Śvetāmbara and Digambara Jains.

Ritual Practice

Within the present aim of non-sectarian temple education, a subset of respondents—more teachers than students—(S 8%, n=12; T 28%, n=36) described the goals of pathshala with reference to building and strengthening the Jain community and/or instilling Jain cultural knowledge. The latter was frequently designated as including Jain “rituals” or “*sūtras*,” which can represent sensory, material, and linguistic modes by which different Jains variously “frame” images, icons, songs, meditation, and other activities within temple life and meaning (Cort 2010, Humphrey 1991, Kelting 2001). Selected replies also included references to the need to preserve language, or cultivate inter-generational or inter-sect community. Answers included:

- to educate young Jains about Jain culture/philosophy
- to provide a place for Jain people to develop community and learn from each other through discussion and contemplation
- to understand the basics of Jainism, to learn sutras, and to learn leadership
- to teach/learn Jain rituals, philosophy, sutras, practices
- to teach basic Jain values and sutras

- to teach Indian languages; teaching [students to] read, write, and speak will connect [them] with Indian culture and people
- to teach about the different Jain ways of life
- to learn about Jain belief and culture
- to teach Jainism to youth and pass on the heritage in a primarily non-Jain, primarily non-Indian society (this is the only response located in two categories, namely the categories of community/culture and translating into a new diaspora context)
- to teach Jain philosophy; to bring the community together; to provide support for kids trying to live by Jain ideals
- to know your religion and understand it better so you can follow it and also set an example for others

The emphasis on ritual is significant for two reasons. First, it marks a tension among U.S. diaspora Jains. While all wish to preserve a *unified* cultural identity as “Jains,” many also want to preserve sectarian rituals that may be geographically and linguistically unique. Many Jains identify strongly with image and icon-centric temple practices, while other Jains maintain strong commitments to an aniconic tradition. Scholars have also identified a “neo-orthodox” approach to Jainism that emphasizes its rational qualities and compatibility with science as taking precedence *over* ritual (Banks 1991, 247; Shah 2014, 519; Auckland 2016). Pravin Shah also downplays the role of rituals among diaspora Jains in his analysis of “next generation” pathshala in which “humanitarian services and environmental protection activities take priority *over traditional temple rituals*” (Shah 2017a; emphasis added).

The vast majority of respondents, however, affirmed that pathshala taught them the meaning of specific Jain rituals (S 86%, n=22; T 86%, n=42), taught them how to perform those rituals (S 64%; T 88%), and helped them locate the textual sources for those rituals (S 55%; T 69%). Moreover, when presented with the statement “I have a desire to learn to do rituals (such as stutis, samayika, and pratikramana) in an Indian language in pathshala,” the majority of students answered favorably (64%, n=22), as did the majority of teachers (57%, n=42). Similarly, a majority also had the desire to learn the rituals in English (S 68%; T 65%). Anjali Doshi, the

2016-17 Director of Education for Young Jains of America (YJA), sheds light on this tension between desiring and/or discarding rituals in a diaspora context in an article titled “The Importance of Jain Education in America,” for the YJA *Young Minds* online platform. She writes:

Given that much of Jain practice involves Indian languages that many youth here don’t speak, and highly specific actions such as sitting in a certain posture for Chaityavandan or Pratikraman, drawing Saathios [Indian *svastikas*] with rice, and more, it’s important that we are taught not just how to say and do these things, but why we are supposed to be doing them. Jainism itself tells us not to have blind faith—that doing things just because we are told to won’t ultimately benefit us. *Whether or not we ultimately choose to practice Jainism and its various rituals, we can only make that choice if we have the knowledge of what such practice entails.* (Doshi 2017; emphasis added).

Doshi’s remarks, along with the survey responses, suggest that diaspora Jains are interested in accessing and practicing Jain rituals as part of their Jain identity in a U.S. context for various reasons, requiring a reexamination of Jain “neo-orthodoxy” claims, in which such rituals are subordinated or discarded, an analysis I will offer in a future paper. Respondents also expressed a wish to learn Jain devotional songs (stavans and bhajans) in an Indian language (S 72%, n=22; T 69%), even more so than in English (S 45%; T 48%), suggesting that the cultural specificity of language, as it functions in ritual, is significant to U.S. Jains in pathshala.

The Role of Text in Pathshala Education

The Jain view of “text” is wide and varied, including oral, written, and performative elements (Dundas 2002, 60). The concept of “canon” is likewise limited in the Jain tradition since, as Kristi Wiley points out, “there is not a single authoritative list of texts accepted as sacred scripture by all of the sectarian traditions” (2009, xix). Most Śvetāmbara Jains accept a full or modified list of forty-five canonical texts (*āgamas*) that were codified at three different councils

during the 4th and the 5th centuries CE.¹⁹ This list of forty-five is composed of the *Āngas* (and the extinct *Pūrvas*) that contain knowledge passed directly from a *Jina* to disciples. Later texts within this list were composed by mendicants, often as practical commentaries on the early *āgamas*. Digambaras, however, reject the authenticity of this collection, believing that most of the early canonical texts were lost. Nevertheless, the Digambara sect also has a collection of texts which are primarily post-canonical expositions composed by mendicant leaders (Wiley 2009, xxv-xxvi). Both sects consider the *Tattvārtha-sūtra*, a 2nd-5th-century text by the mendicant-scholar Umāsvāti, to be authoritative. Modern Jains also consider works by contemporary, charismatic mendicants, or especially devout lay people such as 19th-century mystic and reformer Śrīmad Rājacandra to count as scripture in a meaningful sense.

JAINA Curriculum “Blue Books” Are the Primary Pathshala Text

The concept of religious “text” takes on a broad meaning in Jain pathshala. The vast majority of respondents (88%; n=69) primarily use the Jain Education Series “blue books” created by the JAINA Education Committee (Figure 1.1). Among this majority, respondents reported rarely supplementing (14%) or frequently supplementing (26%) the blue books with “other materials such as handouts, the internet or other books.” Approximately 12% of all respondents primarily use resources beyond the blue books.²⁰

¹⁹ See Wiles (2006) for analysis of these councils, held at Mathurā (under Skandila), at Valabhī (under Nāgārjuna), and later at Valabhī (under Devarddhiganin). Wiles is critical of the scholarly standardization of dates without adequate historical support; Wiles contends that most scholars utilize quite late sources to establish these dates, as well as the names of the overseeing leaders.

²⁰ Those that described their supplementary materials listed: *Jain Way of Life* by Yogendra Jain; Shrimad Rajcandra Divine Touch resources; TED talks, JAINA e-library books, jainworld.com; books from India, self-prepared materials, American books relating to the theme of the class; creating handouts, games and exams based on the blue books; lectures created by pathshala teachers; creating handouts after [independent] research; pathshala books held by their own temple; Powerpoint presentations created by teachers; handouts from the internet and; books made by another teacher.

The JAINA pathshala curriculum is worthy of a separate study in itself. The blue books offer a remarkable condensation of Jain mendicant texts, lay manuals, philosophical concepts, karma theory, universal history, vocabulary, stutis, rituals, ethical application, and interactive activities created by lay Jains.

When asked to describe the primary goal of the blue books, respondents who answered this open-ended question stressed: (1) a simplified and uniform curriculum (36%, n=42):

- to explain the material in an easy and thorough way
- to simplify concepts in Jainism
- to provide a standard understanding of Jain values, rituals, history, principles across the U.S.
- to teach Jain curriculum in a way that is age appropriate and standardized
- to make it visual for students and for teachers to explain
- to simplify texts in layperson English for kids to understand
- to teach Jainism at a basic level for children outside India who are raised in mixed cultural environment
- to provide a uniform curriculum throughout the nation and one easy source to find material with which to teach students
- to lay the foundation of Jainism in a very simple manner
- to ease the curriculum
- to provide a simplified view of Jainism in English speaking countries
- to provide uniform teaching material throughout North America
- to supply basic information in an accessible way
- to give the basic principles of Jainism in simple English
- to learn and teach Jainism in a user friendly format

Additional comments referred to: (2) providing a foundation of Jain philosophy and history (40%; n=42); (3) applying Jain principles in life (7%); and (4) learning rituals and *sūtras* (12%). Two respondents (5%; n=42) claimed the purpose of the blue books was to “spread Jainism” and to “teach Jain kids in the U.S. in the most scientific manner” respectively.

Many students and teachers felt that the blue books achieved their aim. The best features described by students (n=10) included:

- their pictures and deep insights about certain topics
- their ability to explain everything in English
- how accessible they are
- their colors and topics
- their detailed examples and thought experiments
- the increasing levels as you advance through the pathshala
- the fact that they are concise and clear
- their easy to understand translations
- their English-language and layperson-friendly explanations
- their stories and pictures (Figure 1.4)

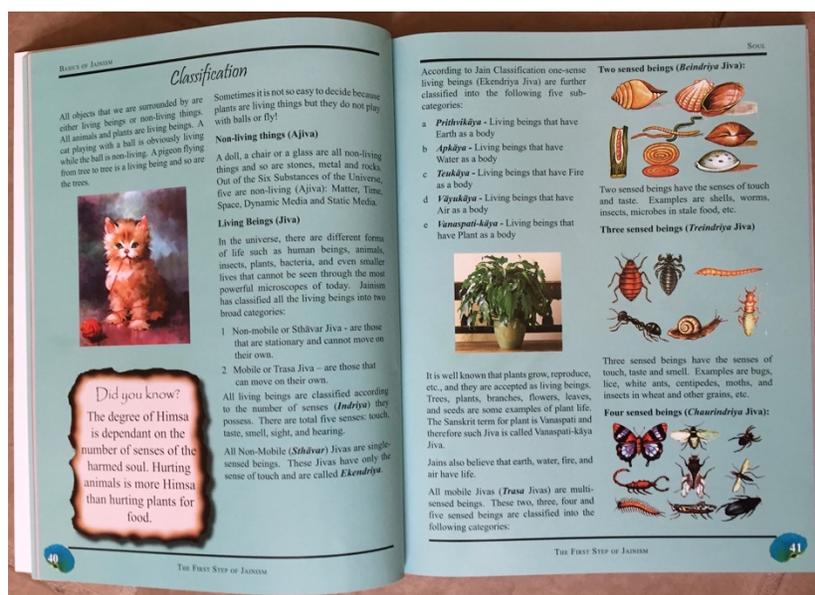


Figure 1.3 JES 203 *The First Steps of Jainism*, p. 40–41: This page exemplifies the stories and visual images used to explain technical Jain concepts for Level-1 students. This page, for example, describes the four classifications (*tiryāñc*) of living beings in Jainism, along with the division of one through five senses assigned to different organisms.

The simplicity, the effective use of pictures, and the easy-to-understand translations, along with the books' organization and their condensed nature were stressed by teachers as well (n=27). While most respondents held positive views of the curriculum, some also offered suggestions for improvement. When presented with the statement “Jain Education Series (blue books) material could be improved by (Please describe):”, answers fell into the following categories:

- Make them more interactive and pictorial (24%, n=42)
- Correct the grammar and English word order (19%)
- Add examples of applicability to daily life (10%)
- Add examples more relevant to modernity and/or science (7%)
- No change needed (5%)
- Not applicable (7%)
- Other answers (19%) included: Put PDFs on the web; reorganize the chapters and content; avoid technical words and higher-level topics in books for younger kids to avoid confusion; provide more details; provide more stories; replace the blue books with the “Compendium of Jainism” used in [Jain Academic Bowl]

Reading Jain Canonical Texts Is Not a Primary Goal of Pathshala

The blue books provide a greater textual foundation for pathshala than any specific text in the Jain canon. When presented with the statement, “Students have the opportunity to read an entire scripture (such as *Kalpa Sutra*, *Acaranga Sutra*, or *Tattvartha Sutra*) in its entirety as part of pathshala,” respondents (n=83; S 34, T 49) indicated that reading scriptures is encouraged but not a central goal of pathshala, choosing from the following replies:

- Yes, it is a structured part of the curriculum (S 9%; T 4%)
- We encourage students to do so but it is not a required part of the curriculum (S 44%; T 35%)
- Students are taught specific portions or verses from Jain scriptures (S 6%; T 6%)
- Reading scriptures is not a primary goal of pathshala (S 29%; T 43%) (Figure 1.4)

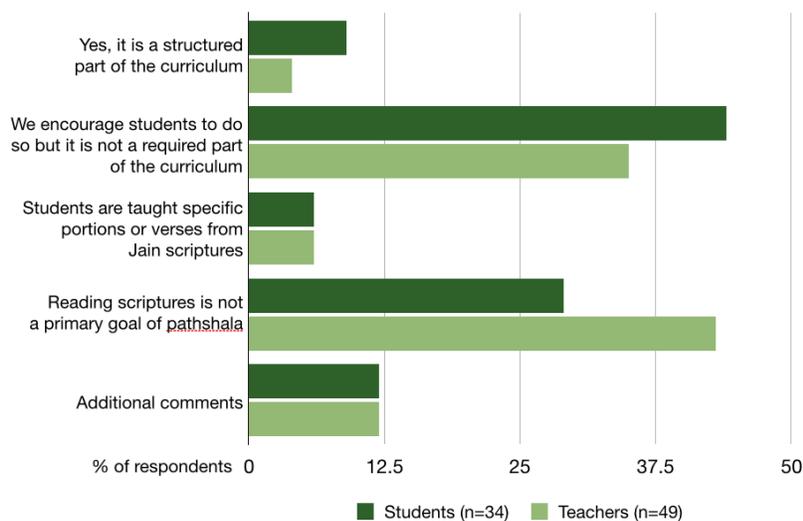


Figure 1.4 Question: “Students have the opportunity to read an entire scripture (such as *Kalpa Sutra*, *Acaranga Sutra*, or *Tattvartha Sutra*) in its entirety as part of pathshala:”

In fact, only about half of students (47%; n=34) and teachers (51%; n=49) had “read a portion of at least one Jain scripture (such as *Kalpa Sutra*, *Acaranga Sutra*, or *Tattvartha Sutra*)” on their own. Though there was ambivalence regarding the need to read scriptures at all, respondents (n=83; S 34, T 49) felt that it was more important for students to read scriptures in English (S 68%; T 53%), than in an Indian language such as Hindi or Gujarati (S 44%; T 24%) or in the original language of Prākṛit or Sanskrit (S 44%; T 22%). However, a considerable number of teachers (n=49) described themselves as “neutral” on the value of reading texts at all, whether in English (29%), Hindi or Gujarati (37%), or Prākṛit/Sanskrit (29%).

This lack of interest in scriptures may reflect the historical lack of access that lay Jains had to mendicant *sūtras*. Not only were these texts written in specialized languages such as Prākṛit and Sanskrit—and thus unreadable by most lay Jains—the texts were part of a monk’s or a nun’s gradual education on an extensive range of topics in Jainism that many mendicants felt could not be properly interpreted by lay Jains without the guidance of a learned mendicant teacher and without the discipline of mendicant austerities (Flügel 2005, 5). Later texts for lay Jains, known as *śrāvaka-ācāra* or the “layperson’s rules of conduct,” were more accessible for devout lay Jains, but still required specialized language skills and often a mendicant-preceptor. As Dundas points out, venerating a copy of a scripture, or hearing portions of it recited during a festival, mediates a significant level of meaning without a lay Jain ever having to read the text personally (2002, 60-67). However, with the rise of translations and Jain Studies scholarship since the late nineteenth-century, an increasing number of texts in the Jain canon are available in English.

In spite of the low prioritization of reading Jain scripture in pathshala classes, a majority of students and teachers responded affirmatively to the statement “Pathshala helps me trace Jain practices and beliefs to specific ancient scriptures” (S 65%, n=34; T 78%, n=49). I suggest three

possible hypotheses regarding this seeming discrepancy between these answers. First, the blue books do occasionally reference verses that are attributed to particular Jain *āgamas* or commentarial texts, though only occasionally is a chapter, verse, or page number noted (Figure 1.6). Second, and more often the case, the blue books refer to Jain scriptures generally as the source for a particular point of Jain philosophy or mendicant practice. For example, in the 302-level blue book, a section on mendicant characteristics reads: “Some scriptures mention [the] following 27 attributes of ascetics” (Figure 1.7). While these texts are not detailed by name, and while it is not explicitly stated that the list is a compilation of content from several sources, it is nonetheless true that the attributes have been traced back to Jain scriptures.

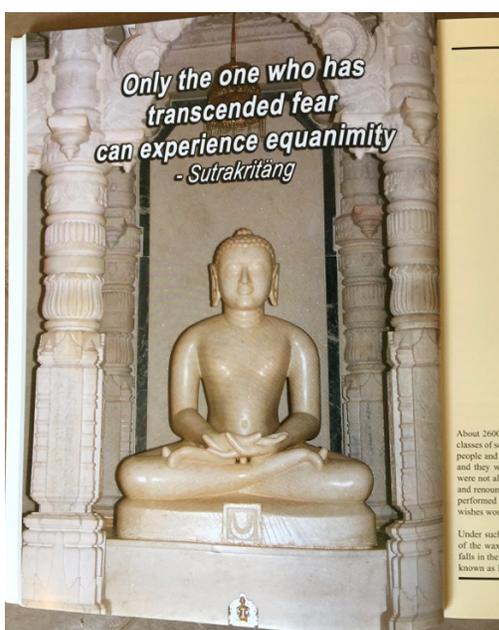


Figure 1.5 *JES 202 Jain Story Book*, p. 16: This page references a quote from a particular *āgama* called *Sūtrakṛtāṅga-sūtra*, one of the earliest *aṅgas* in the Śvetāmbara canon.

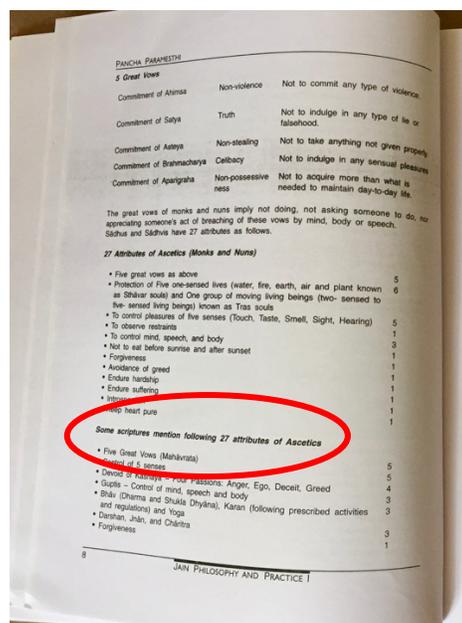


Figure 1.6 *JES 302 Jain Philosophy and Practice-1*, p. 8: “Some scriptures mention . . .” offers a connection to Jain texts for the attributes of ascetics without providing any concrete text, verse, etc.

Third, many respondents—53% of students (n=34) and 63% of teachers (n=49)—felt that memorizing *sūtras* is an important part of pathshala; a significant percentage felt that it was

important enough to have exams to test such memorization—(S 35%, n=34; T 55%, n=49)—suggesting that memorizing portions of *sūtras* for ritual recitation transmits textual meaning even without the text being read.

Personal and Oral Sources as the Most Authoritative for Pathshala Students and Teachers

While the pathshala blue books function as a source of authority for some diaspora Jains, the most important authoritative sources remain personal relationships that emphasize oral transmission. Individuals also placed a high value on independent thought and self-learning.

Family members and pathshala teachers were considered authoritative sources. Participants were asked: “When I seek an authoritative opinion on an issue of Jain belief or practice, I seek out (Choose top three).” Texts in general, including the blue books, ranked far below personal sources. Students selected parents (74%, n=34), a grandparent (44%), or a pathshala teacher (44%) as the top three sources, followed by friends and a member of the Young Jains of America community (24% each). Teachers also ranked parents as the highest source of authority (51%, n=49), as well as a pathshala teacher (39%). Teachers placed a much higher value than students on the authority of traveling Jain scholars who visit temples (49%), a *samaṇ/samaṇī* (intermediate monk or nun) in the U.S. (31%), and a *sādhu/sādhvī* (monk/nun) in India (22%) (Figure 1.8).

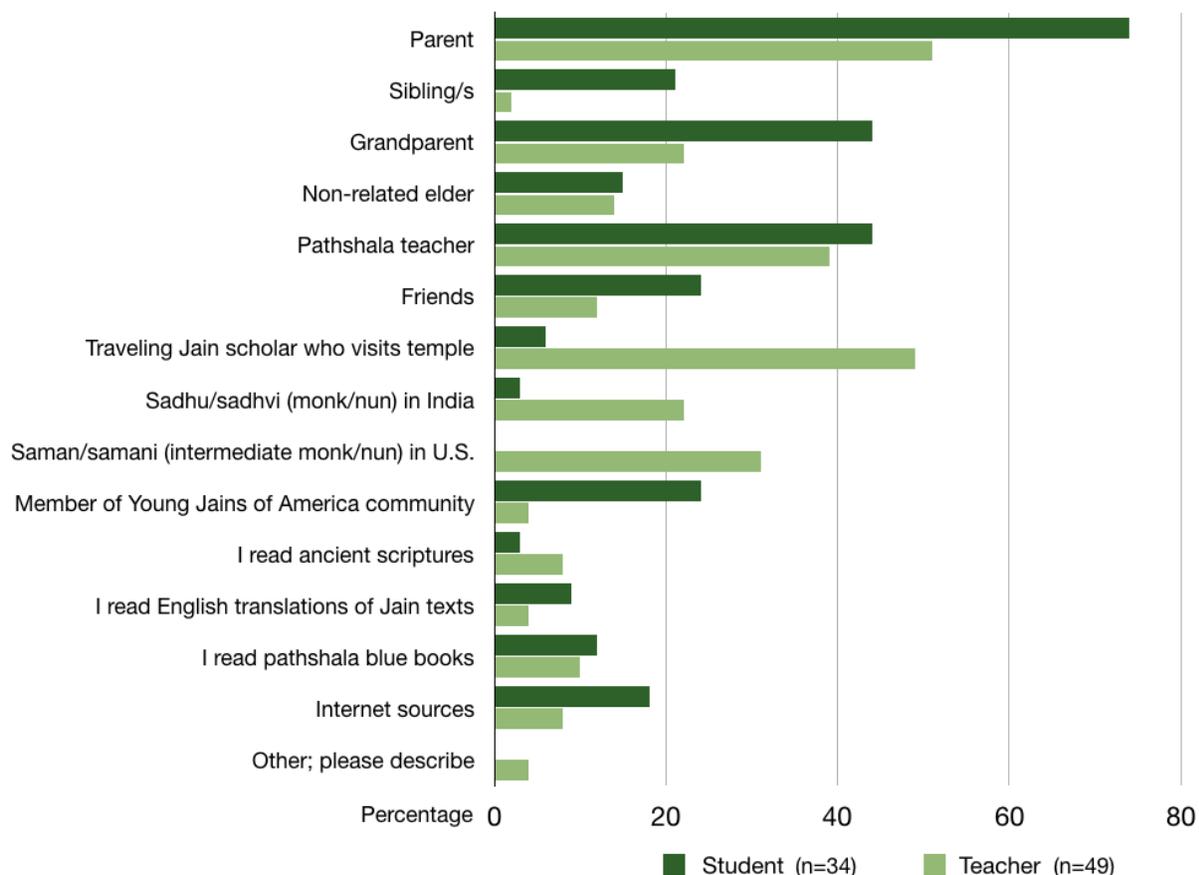


Figure 1.7 “When I seek an authoritative opinion on an issue of Jain belief or practice I seek out (Choose top three):”

When it comes to understanding Jain history and ethical principles, both students and teachers credited pathshala as a primary source of learning, though not the only source, nor always the most primary. Students, for example, credited pathshala as the greatest source of information for Jain *history* (94%, n=34), but also cited other sources of authority such as family (71%), “reading Jain scriptures on my own in English” (56%), “my Young Jains of America community” (41%), and “independent reading and research” (38%). Students followed the same trends when learning Jain *ethical principles*, with pathshala being the foremost source (100%, n=34), followed by family (79%), “independent reading and research” (47%), “reading Jain scriptures on my own in English” (44%), and “my Young Jains of America community” (41%).

As a relevant note, the survey did not ask respondents to clarify what constituted their particular form of “Young Jains of America (YJA) community.” However, since its inception in 1991, YJA has become an increasingly organized, youth-driven organization, offering a biennial conference, regional meetings, college chapters, and a tech-rich online platform with youth-created content (yja.org). *Young Minds* is YJA’s (print and online) magazine. It was launched in 2008, and YJA also began creating its own online pathshala content in 2017, led by students who had attended U.S. pathshala, had taught at U.S. pathshala, and/or who had participated in the Jain Academic Bowl (“YJA Pathshala”). The growth and dissemination of YJA’s influence suggests myriad modes of connecting with the Young Jains “community”—in person, in print, and via digital media—an influence that appears to be on the rise.

Teachers felt that the pathshala was a significant source of learning regarding Jain *history* (71%, n=49), followed by family (65%), “independent reading and research” (49%), “reading Jain scriptures on my own in English” (47%), “reading Jain scriptures on my own in an Indian language” (45%), and “online videos and websites” (37%). Among teachers, ten participants (20%) offered “Other” sources such as monks and nuns in India (6), a guru (1), Jain Academic Bowl preparation (1), books written by American professors/researchers (1), and lectures, books, and tapes by traveling Jain scholars [from India] (1). For teachers, the primary source of learning about Jain *ethical principles* was family (78%, n=49), followed by pathshala classes (69%), reading scriptures in English (55%), reading scriptures in an Indian language (43%), independent reading and research (43%) and online videos and websites (29%). Audio lectures were a lesser but still significant source of learning for teachers (22%), as was the Young Jains of America community (18%). Only 9% (n=34) of students and 2% (n=49) of teachers had learned Jain history or ethical principles from “an academic course at a college or university,” although

substantive percentages of students (41%; n=22) and teachers (60%; n=42) desired to study Jainism at a college or university. These responses offer a point of interest considering the large financial gifts that U.S. Jains have made in recent years for endowed Chairs in Jain Studies and other teaching positions at U.S. academic institutions.²¹

The high value placed on self-learning likely ushers forth from a diaspora community attempting to interpret its ancient practices in a new context, without the presence of mendicants. When asked if “Jainism leaves space for new interpretations of Jain belief and practice,” about half of the students and teachers felt it was actively encouraged; a significant minority of students and teachers felt it was permitted, even if not encouraged (Figures 1.9a and 1.9b). No teachers believed that reinterpretation was discouraged or impermissible.

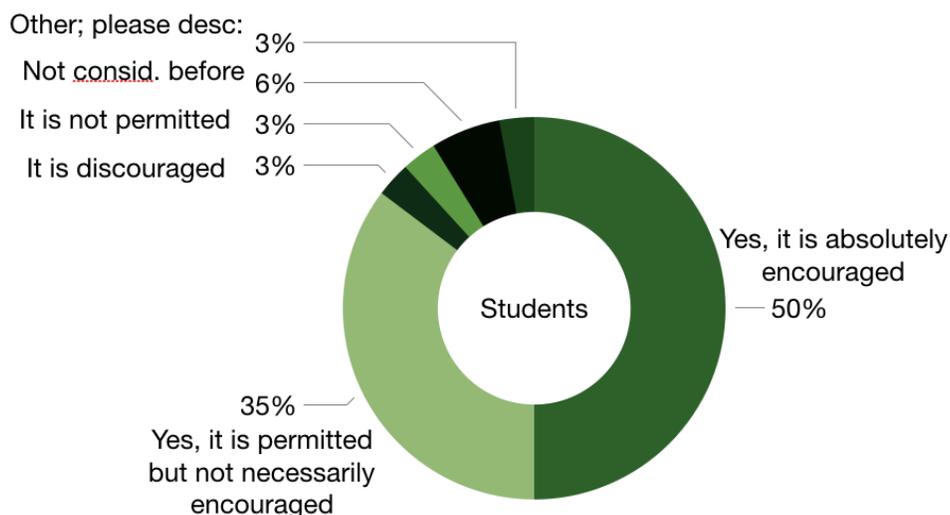


Figure 1.8a Student responses to the question: “Jainism leaves space for new interpretations of Jain beliefs and practices:” (n=34)

²¹ The following U.S. institutions have a full-time position in Jain Studies (noted with the year of endowment): Florida International University (2010), University of California (UC) Irvine (2015), Rice University (2016), University of North Texas (2017), UC Riverside (2017), UC Davis (2017), UC Santa Barbara (2018), California State Northridge (2018), and Loyola Marymount University (2018).

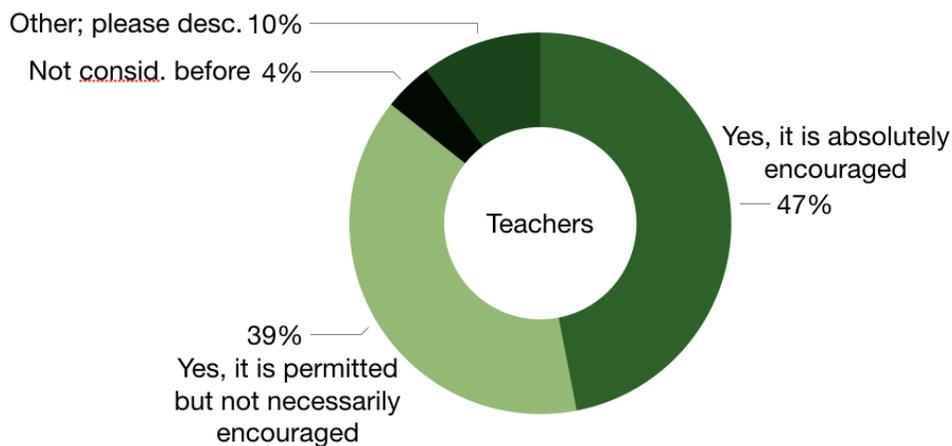


Figure 1.8b Teacher responses to the question: “Jainism leaves space for new interpretations of Jain beliefs and practices?” (n=49)

Relatedly, a majority of students and teachers also affirmed the statement, “Pathshala is a place to discuss new interpretations of Jain belief and practices”:

- Yes, it is one of the primary goals of pathshala (S 56%, n=34; T 47%, n=49)
- Yes, but we are primarily trying to stick to the curriculum (S 32%; T 39%)
- Pathshala is not the best setting for this activity but there are other avenues within the temple (S 3%; T 4%)
- This is a private matter to be dealt with outside the temple (S 3%; T 2%)
- Other; please describe: (S 6%; T 8%)

Those few students who selected “Other” described Young Jains of America as the ideal place to discuss new interpretations, while another wrote “[I]t depends on the pathshala teacher because sometimes they have their own interpretation and are stubborn with it.” Teachers who selected “Other” suggested that an adult self-study course (*svādhyāya*) is a better venue for these questions, and that new interpretations should be checked by a “self-realized soul.”

Students and teachers placed a high value on utilizing independent thought to evaluate the claims of the Jain tradition and of modern society. When presented with the statement, “I believe it is very important to use independent reasoning and critical thinking to evaluate *the claims of*

Jainism,” the majority of students strongly agreed (44%, n=34) or agreed (41%); the remaining participants selected “I don't know” (12%) or “Other” (3%), with one respondent remarking: “a lot of youth focus solely on questioning/discussing Jainism and not on following it.” For the same question, teachers strongly agreed (43%, n=49) or agreed (41%), with the remainder choosing “I don't know” (10%), “somewhat disagree” (4%), or “strongly disagree” (2%).

When presented with the statement, “I believe it is very important to use independent reasoning and critical thinking to evaluate the *claims of modern society*, for example within science, politics, and culture,” students strongly agreed (47%, n=34), agreed (44%), chose “I don't know” (6%), or “somewhat disagree” (3%). For the same question, teachers strongly agreed (39%, n=49), agreed (43%), selected “I don't know” (13%) or “Other” (6%), with the following remarks:

- “The key is what is the purpose behind [the evaluation]?”
- “Modern society has failed to teach nonviolence and ethics. You have to teach both from childhood . . .”
- “I believe there is space and need for spirituality and science in everyone's life. Critical thinking is key to unlock that treasure.”

Students and teachers claimed to rely on their own self-learning as well as personal sources when confronted with a challenging question. When asked, “When you want to find out something specific about Jain history, philosophy, or practice, what would your first step be? (Choose top three),” the top four student sources included: parents (56%, n=34), the internet (53%), a pathshala teacher (47%), and a member of my Young Jains of America community (32%).

Teachers' top four sources emphasized self-study followed by personal relations, expressed in the following answers: the internet (53%, n=49), the JAINA E-library (45%), parents (43%), a pathshala teacher (31%). Teachers made far greater use than students of the online JAINA E-Library (S 12%; T 45%). The blue curriculum books were selected by a minority of both

teachers and students (S 18%; T 20%). Those teachers who selected “Other” (n=8) named additional sources such as traveling Jain scholars from India (5), an intermediate mendicant in the U.S. (*saman/samanī*) (2), and Pravin Shah, the JAINA Education Director (1) (Figure 1.10).

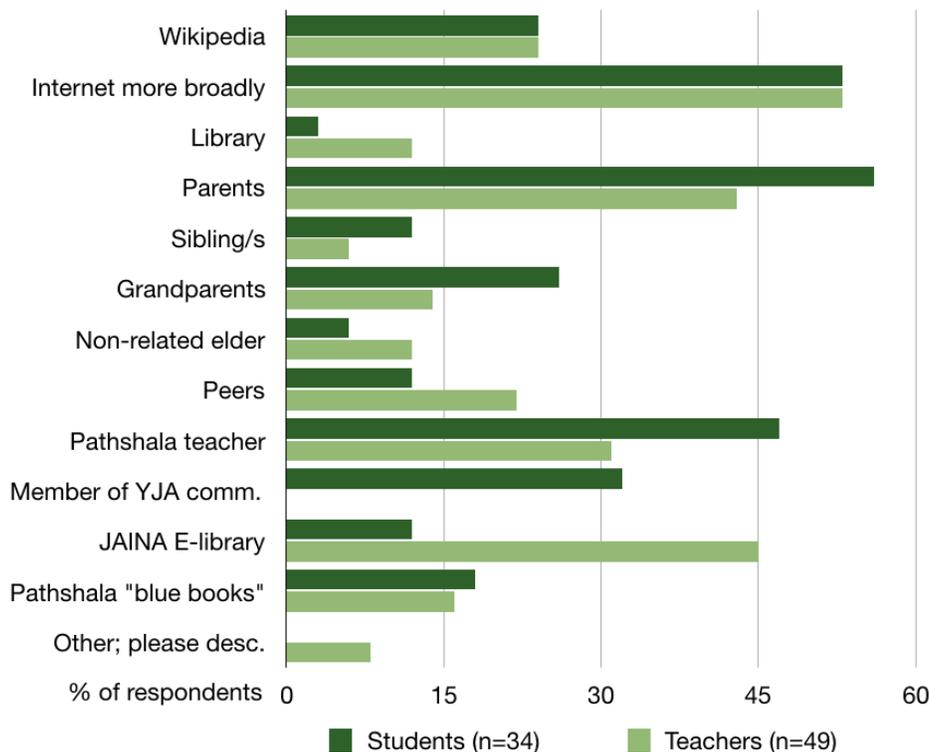


Figure 1.9 Question: “When you want to find out something specific about Jain history, philosophy, or practice, what would your first step be? (Choose top three):”

Qualities of an Authoritative Pathshala Teacher

Pathshala teachers ranked fairly high for students in relation to the above questions, both as sources of authoritative opinions and as “first stop” sources for questions. Consequently, it is not too surprising that the majority of students, when asked if pathshala teachers are considered a reliable source of authority, answered affirmatively (85%; n=34). Teachers were more moderate in their responses, with just over half (53%; n=49) feeling that pathshala teachers were authoritative sources. Knowledge, however, was not the most important quality in a pathshala teacher. Students and teachers ascribed the highest importance to a teacher’s energy and teaching

style, their emphasis on the practical challenges of Jain life, and their willingness to discuss taboo subjects, to a considerably greater extent than their knowledge of texts, rituals, and history (Figure 1.11). A teacher born and raised in the same culture was seen as important by a lower, but still significant, percentage of respondents.

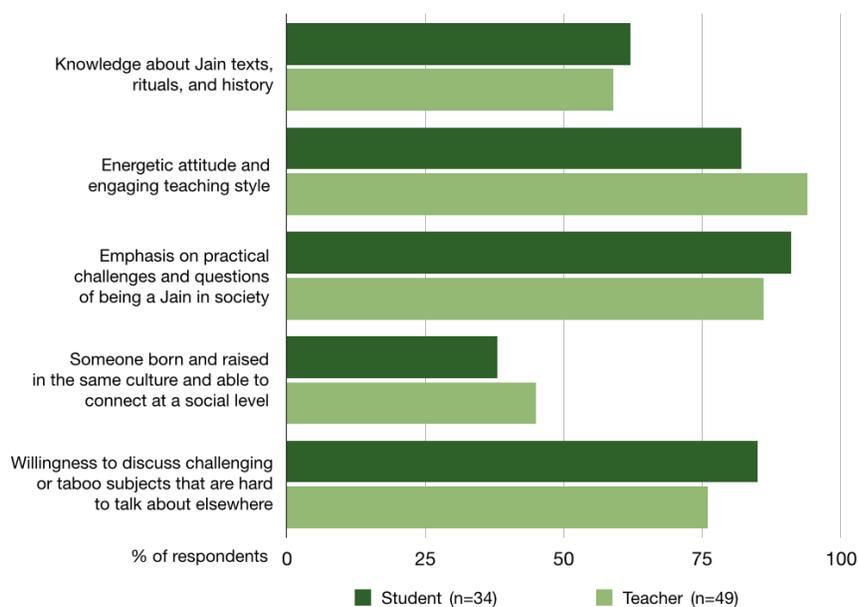


Figure 1.10 Question: “How important is the following quality in a pathshala teacher?” The above chart reflects those who selected “Extremely important” (versus “Somewhat important” or “Little to no importance,” which are responses not reflected in this figure).

When asked to describe the qualities that make a pathshala teacher most effective, 35% (n=12) of students offered open-ended answers. Several of these described the ability of a teacher to “relate” to students (42%), to be willing to critically investigate Jain claims with activities and questions (33%), and to provide examples of how to apply Jainism in practical situations (17%). For the same question, 61% (n=30) of teachers provided open-ended answers. They also emphasized relatability to students, with the express goal of facilitating an open, interactive classroom (37%), followed by dedication and commitment to the role of a pathshala teacher (30%), and being a model of Jain qualities inside and outside the classroom (20%). One response illuminated the unique role that pathshala teachers play within the lives of young Jains, in a

context without mendicant authorities: “In the U.S. context, not every parent can coach their kids. I see a pathshala teacher as a coach as well as close family aunt/uncle to the student who provides spiritual, religious, and moral guidance. People with these qualities make good pathshala teachers.”

A significant percentage of respondents felt that pathshala teachers were amenable to discussing “controversial issues in Jain belief and practice.” Most students and teachers selected the responses “very willing” (S 41%, n=34; T 29%, n=49) and “somewhat willing” (S 35%; T 43%), with only a few choosing “not very willing” (S 9%; T 6%), “extremely resistant” (S 3%; T 4%), or “I wouldn’t bring the topic up” (S 3%; T 4%).

Part 1 Conclusion

U.S. Pathshala is considered a meaningful activity and valuable source of learning for the majority of Jain student and teacher respondents. However, the goals of temple education are understood and expressed differently, including: (1) knowing Jain values, (2) acting out Jain values (3) dealing with context-specific challenges, and (4) preserving cultural connections to India.

The JAINA curriculum blue books function as the primary text for U.S. pathshala and are more accessible and utilized than canonical texts. The blue book curriculum mediates aspects of the Jain canon by offering occasional verses and un-cited compilations of content, as well as by teaching certain *sūtras* for memorization. The blue books enlarge the notion of “text,” which is already capacious in the Jain tradition. Although the blue books are not as commonly sought out for authoritative information as family, teachers, or self-learning, they do function as a resource when questions arise for a minority of students and teachers. While some respondents suggested

minor improvements to the curriculum, most students and teachers viewed the blue books as effective teaching tools. Where canonical texts can supplement the blue books, English translations are the preferred option.

Family members and pathshala teachers are seen as primary transmitters of the Jain tradition, more than texts, as are members of the Young Jains of America community for students. The personal nature of the inquiry suggests that the U.S. Jain community retains a strong oral mode of transmission, even in the absence of monks and nuns. Furthermore, self-motivated learning plays a significant role for students and teachers. While both utilize the internet, teachers also rely on the JAINA E-library. Few participants turn to canonical texts when in need of an authoritative view.

The emphasis on self-motivated learning reflects students' and teachers' strong commitment to independent reasoning and critical thinking to evaluate the claims of the Jain tradition as well as the claims of modern science, politics, and culture. Pathshala class, as well as pathshala teachers, are widely perceived as open to controversial discussions, which is largely due to an increase in authority among lay people in the absence of mendicants, as well as the demands of young Jains for teachers to bring Jainism into dialog with the contemporary context they have been raised in. Relatedly, the best qualities of pathshala teachers include their willingness to discuss taboo subjects, their possession of an energetic attitude, an engaging teaching style, and an emphasis on the practical challenges of being a Jain in society, rather than placing importance on whether or not they were born in the same culture or even the extent of their knowledge of the tradition.

In Part II of this survey analysis, I will answer the following research questions: (1) How does pathshala help students/teachers deal with tensions between Jainism and modernity?; (2) How

does pathshala help students/teachers navigate their social roles and identities?; (3) What is the content of pathshala?, and; (4) How influential is pathshala for U.S. Jains?

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