

History of JCGB Pathshala - 1982 - 2021

August 2021

1. Our History

- **First Pathshala in North America:** The history of Jain Center of Greater Boston (JCGB) Pathshala dates back to 1982 as the first Jain Pathshala in North America. The Pathshala started soon after JCGB purchased its temple building in 1981, which was the first Jain temple in North America. The Jain community was over 100 families strong and consisted of all Jain sects and mostly young members starting their families. The Pathshala was founded by Yogendra Jain and Dr. Rajendra Jain. Together with Kishor Shah and Dr. Ratilal Dodhia, this team compiled the first set of English Pathshala books for Levels 1, 2, and 3 during 1983-85. Preeti Jain joined in 1988 and since then has strengthened the Pathshala leading with innovative teaching techniques, strong organizational skills, cultural activities, and creative art direction. In the late '80s first Pathshala camp was held in Siddhachalam and activities included yoga, meditation, and community service. Pathshala continued to grow to over 50 students in 1990 and all four corners of the temple and the basement were used as classrooms. Parents served homemade meals for all attendees.
- **Continued Expansion:** From 1991, as the community grew, Pathshala continued expanding under the leadership of Pankaj Shah and Hemant Shah. An organizational structure was put in place, More teachers joined, and Pathshala was now being held at local schools to support over 75 students. Starting in 1993 several large-scale projects were presented by L5/L6 pathshala students at JAINA conventions under the guidance and creative direction of Yogendra and Preeti Jain. Students also participated in the JAINA Academic Bowls. In 1988, JCGB and Pathshala teachers organized a First Conference of the Pathshala teachers in North America. This three-day conference was attended by 81 teachers from all over North America. As a major milestone of this conference, a non-sectarian curriculum was prepared for each level. The JAINA education committee prepared material and published books. By 2002 Pathshala had grown to 115 students. In 2004, as some teachers moved to teach at another new temple location, JCGB Pathshala continued serving its growing membership with additional dedicated teachers and volunteers.
- **Women Leadership:** From 2003-2020 (17 years) Pathshala has flourished under the Directorship of several dedicated women with great vision and leadership skills: Preeti Jain, Vandana Jain, Mamta Mehta, Priya Jain, and Prity Turkhia. These leaders increased the adoption of technology, created policies and procedures, encouraged parental involvement via teaching and volunteering, and with support from teachers introduced creative teaching methods through art and cultural programs and annual summer/winter camps including Art of Living. In 2005 Pathshala took a 60+ students

Rishabhdev Play to JAINA convention in NJ. As JCGB secured our current large temple in Norwood in 2010, its many classrooms helped Pathshala move back to the temple setting. The popular annual “JCGB Talent Show” was started to commemorate the Pratistha Anniversary showcasing Pathshala students’ talent. Activities also included a yearly Walk for Hunger fundraiser. During these years several graduated JCGB Pathshala students took leading roles in the YJA Board and also won JAINA Youth Awards for their commitment to the temple and the community at large.

- **Pathshala 2020:** Today JCGB Pathshala is 135 students strong. Our current 22+ teachers and coordinators have 200+ years of combined experience. In a 2020 survey of parents, 95% of the respondents have rated the JCGB pathshala as 5 out of 5.
- **Pathshala During the Covid Pandemic:** JCGB Pathshala did not miss a beat. Starting in April 2020, the tech-savvy teachers switched to online and continued providing high-quality lessons and engagement with students.

2. Pathshala Team (1982-2020)

Term(s)	Directors* / Coordinators	Current Teachers/Coordinators (by # of years of service)	Past Teachers/ Coordinators*
1982-1986	Yogendra Jain, Rajendra Jain	Yogendra Jain (39)	Rajendra Jain
1986-1992	Kishor Shah	Preeti Jain (33)	Kishore Shah
1992-1998	Pankaj Shah	Gira Tamboli (15)	Ratilal Dodhia
1999-2003	Hemant Shah	Prity Turkhia (15)	Pankaj Shah (13)
2003-2005	Preeti Jain / Smriti Shah	Mamta Mehta (12)	Mita Shah (13)
2005-2007	Vandana Jain	Priya Jain (12)	Hemant Shah
2007-2009	Rajesh Mehta/ Sanjay Jain	Varsha Shah (12)	Harsha Mehta
2009-2014	Mamta Mehta / Sanjay Jain/Brahmadev Jain	Jyotsna Sait (10-C)	Sweta Mepani
2014-2016	Priya Jain / Dharmendra Sethi	Sanjay Jain (10)	Jagruti Mehta(C)
2016-2021	Prity Turkhia / Jyotsna Sait	Supriya Palawat (10)	Haresh Mehta
		Nikesh Kotadiya (10)	Hemlata Mehta
		Sandeep Lunavat (9)	Vandana Jain
		Kavita Shah (9)	Arti Mehta
		Sapna Mola (8)	Anju Kodia
		Aditi Patni (8)	Dimple Parekh
		Alpa Shah (3)	Smriti Shah
		Shubham Jain (3)	Veena Teli
		Tanya Jain (3)	Surekha Jain
		Piyusha Shah (3)	Nutan Vora
		Priyam Turkhia** (3)	Paulomi Gudka**
		Hitesh Jain (3)	Rakhi Jain**
		Finale Doshi** (2)	

*With 2+ years of service; **Past Students as teachers; C is Coordinator;

3. Pathshala Highlights

- 1982 - First Pathshala in North America
- 1983-85 - Published Jain Pathshala books in English
- 1988 - First JCGB Pathshala camp in Siddhachalam
- 1993 - Pittsburg JAINA convention - Theme “Jain Experience”, computer quiz
- 1995 - Chicago JAINA convention- Academic Bowl and cultural program
- 1997 - Toronto JAINA convention - Tattvartha Sutra, Ancient Scripture Comes Alive
- 1997 - Visit to Burger King headquarters with a petition to add Vegetarian items to menu
- 1998 - Pathshala teachers conference with 81 teachers from North America
- 1999 - Philadelphia JAINA convention- Gunasthan presentation, 21st century Jain Life Play, Tapestry – An interactive map of Jainism
- 1999 - Maina Sundari Dance Drama
- 2000 - First ever combined Digambar and Shwetambar annual pathshala puja with meaning
- 2001 - Research to promote use of cruelty free items and outreach to PETA
- 2001 - Chicago JAINA convention- Comparative study of world religions
- 2003 - Cincinnati JAINA convention- Reconciling and Strengthening our Faith, Rebranding and Repackaging of Jainism
- 2003 - Jain Prayers book and Sutras book was published.
- 2003 - Summer camp for 50+ students
- 2004 - Art of Living camp for 50+ students
- 2005 - Santa Clara JAINA convention- Jain way of life – Looking in the Mirror
- 2007 - New Jersey JAINA Convention - Bhagwan Rishabhdev’s Panchkalyanak - Dance Drama with 60+ students.
- 2007 - Jain Way of Life Book published
- 2009 - Los Angeles JAINA convention– Multiple Seminars
- 2011 - Houston JAINA convention– Exhibition of Jain Projects in North America
- 2013 - Detroit JAINA convention- Eco-Vegan Project Exhibition
- 2015 - JOY program started for student volunteer activities
- 2015 - Annual Winter Camp Started
- 2018 - Presidential award program started for Pathshala students
- 2019 - First ever English voiceovers by students for 15+ animated Jain stories
- 2019 - Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA)
- 2021 - Worldwide Jain community Survey design and implementation

4. Strengthening our Core Mantra

Our core mantra has been to make JCGB and its Pathshala an inclusive place for Jains of all sects to come under one umbrella. Our curriculum is non-sectarian. Students are offered opportunities to participate in national conventions, such as JAINA and YJA, and prepared to live a Jain way of life after their graduation.

5. Looking Ahead

As we look at the future and continue to grow, one major challenge looms. Many forces including social media and extra-curricular activities are demanding childrens' attention. The time for Pathshala is starting to shrink. Only you - as parents and grandparents - can set the stage for a balanced allocation of time - set examples, strengthen culture and practices, respect and participate in all traditions, encourage children to come to temple functions, and continue supporting them to be active learners of our great Jain religion, tradition, and way of life. What better can we offer to our children and families than an environment that promotes the life-long friendship of people who practice the same faith, diet, and lifestyle?