

Cardinal Tauran –AV Speech Final 5-24/5-29-15

Good Morning and *SUPRABHATAM*

His Eminence Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran; His Secretary and pride for Indians Father Santiago Michael; The Most Reverend Mitchell Rozanski, Bishop of Diocese of Springfield , Mass.; The Reverend Father John Crossin; Professor Francis Clooney; Dean Dipak Jain; Shri Prem Jain, President of JAINA (Federation of **Jain Associations In North America**); Shri Pravin Dand, Chairman of Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington; Shri Janak Rajani, President of Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington; Shri Paresh Shah, Chairman of the Past Presidents Council of Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington and may I add a tireless worker to make this event possible; Shri Manoj Dharmasi Past President of JAINA and holder of many positions including President & Chairmanship of Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington; Dr. Tansukh Salgia of Ohio Past President of JAINA; Shri Pravin Shah of Raleigh, Chairman JAINA Education Committee; Shri Uday Jain of Houston, Chairman JAINA Academic Scholarships; Past Presidents- Past and current Trustees –Past and current Executive Board Members of Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington; Mr. C. Eduardo Vargas of US AID(**United States Agency for International Development**); Dr. Panna Shah

of Long Island Multi Faith Forum(LIMFF), Our well Wishers from HWPL
(Heavenly culture World Peace restoration of Light)

Namaste to our Hindu Dignitaries and colleagues;

Sat Shri Akal & Wahe Guruji ka Khalsa Wahe Guruji ki Fateh to our SIKH
Neighbors;

Salam Ale Ku to our Muslim Brothers;

Pax and Paaz to our Christian well-wishers;

We JAIN greet to each other by saying JAI JINENDRA –Greetings of Peace;

Similarly I do extend my JAI JINENDRA - Greetings of PEACE to all of you
and welcome you all with open mind, on this beautiful day.

My opening remarks consists of our arrival in new world, JAINA, Interfaith
Committee & its activities, Jainism and our dreams.

Liberalizations of immigration laws of USA and Independence of undivided
India - made possible among many with Pujya Gandhiji being in forefront

(little more on that later), made it possible for the arrivals of many of us from southeast Asia, who brought with them in sixties and early seventies; professional skills along with cultural, linguistic and more important for today's event religious diversities.

As I have said too often to my fellows from India that the western style democracies and eastern style Dharmic traditions usually are not in harmony in fact they do pose challenges.

Let me begin with JAINA an acronym for - Jain Associations In North America - that took conceptual existence in the West Coast of USA in 1981 and concrete existence came in what we label now as JAINA Convention during the very first convention in New York. There, being the Secretary of Jain Center of America, I became the First Convener as what we label now JAINA Conveners. The first election took place and Manoj Dharmasi who is present among us became the first elected president and myself the first elected secretary of JAINA.

The pioneers of JAINA in its early existence gave importance to ***Anekantvada***, one of the important principles of Jainism. It is referred in many ways but simply speaking truth and realities are difficult for most human beings to see and realize in their many manifestations. My longtime

friend, a fellow engineer and co-chair at the JAINA Interfaith Committee, Shri Naresh Jain who is present here with his wife Sarlaben from New Jersey has made it even simpler with play on words by abbreviating Dharmic traditions most important word OM, which is O for Open and M for Mind; so Anekantvada becomes OM!!! (Those who are looking to simplify even more just remember **O** for Obama, President of USA and **M** for Modi, Prime Minister of India)

When you look at the world around you, most problems are caused by the parties involved not having open minds to understand and visualize the different point of views and perspectives. Talking about problems, Bishop of Manila said it beautifully on Friday at the Georgetown University that problems have solutions, for example too many cars on narrow roads –widen the road. But between family – husband & wife – issues are dilemma and answer to that is dialogue.

Now, let me say few words about the Interfaith Committee of JAINA. By creating this committee in the late 80's JAINA promoted the principle of Anekantvada - or Open Mind. I, being Chairman of this committee for more than last dozen years along with many like-minded Jain members spread

throughout the North America can take pride in many outstanding achievements. Just to name a dozen:

1. Invitation from the White House for a Bill Signing Ceremony
2. Invitation from the India's Rashtrapati Bhavan that is the President of India for an Interfaith Dialogue
3. Interfaith and Jain prayers at the inaugurations of elected officials and at State Houses and Capitols
4. Leading and participating in meaningful & symbolic prayer services after 9-11
5. Membership in a White House Task Force
6. To meet and greet spiritual leaders like His holiness the Dalai Lama, Pope John Paul and Pope Benedict
7. Participations at religious events hosted by Consulates, Embassies and UN Missions
8. Presentations of workshops and papers at United Nations
9. Noticeable presence and active participations at the Parliament of World Religions massive gatherings
10. Membership in interfaith/multifaith organizations at local , national and international level

11. Participating and making presentations on Jainism at schools, places of worships and civic institutions
12. Participations, support and encouragement to non-Jains for the last nine years to celebrate Mahaveera Jayanti at their places of worships on Long Island

One of the most important contributions of this committee & Education Committee is the publication of the book titled Essence of World Religions, compiled by my teacher and a fellow engineer Shri Pravin Shah from North Carolina, who is present among us. This 80 page book has seen many reprints. Few years ago 1000 plus copies were ordered for distribution at the Pastors Convention, in the Pacific north-West.

For my many non-Jains, the three most important principles of Jainism are: Ahimsa means non-violence, Anekantvada – keeping an open mind, and Aparigraha – keeping one's needs to a minimum. In our modern times one person, other than Jain priestly class, who transformed the world by implementation of these principles is Mahatma Gandhi. He used non-violence to gain freedom from British rule, he practiced Aparigraha to win the

hearts of millions of poor Indians; in fact, he had less than dozen items when he died; and he demonstrated Anekantvada by understanding and knowing a multitude of minority and majority viewpoints to avoid conflicts- even though he may not have always been successful in convincing all sides, and the failures of which we are paying horrible prices, now. Gandhiji was born in a Hindu Family but was heavily influenced by his Jain surroundings and his scholarly exchanges of views with Jain authorities. At present he is quoted as the foremost moral authority and heavily quoted by all at every corner of the world, commoners and leaders alike. Very few if any have so many postal stamps, coins and statues being made to memorialize their own legacy.

At interfaith and multifaith presentations Jain representatives would politely say that we believe that the Jain faith has no beginning and no end (*anant chovis*). It was here millions years ago and will be millions years henceforth. Its name, people, place, and language may change but the eternal principles of Jainism will be alive and spread by what we call Tirthankaras and by their followers. Anyone can become Tirthankara, born in Asia, Africa, America; rich or poor; young or old, male or female – it is the ultimate democracy! In fact most if not all, Tirthankaras were born as non-Jains. There is no need for conversion or reconversion.

Lastly, I want to touch on Long Island Multi Faith Forum. It was formed by the Auburn Theological Seminary and Long Island Council of Churches with heavy backing of Diocese of Rockville Centre. It is Christians, if I may say Roman Catholics in particular who helped to deepen my faith of Jainism. I have been the Chairman since its inception. There are twelve living and breathing faiths who have committed their voluntary services to make Long Island a hospitable place for all faiths. Can you imagine twelve faith representatives meeting every month for last twenty years? LIMFF has created two videos/DVD for presentations and held more than 300 Building Bridges and School Festivals, conservatively reaching more than 100,000 people, mostly school age students. After 9-11 Muslim and Sikh leaders gave credits to LIMFF for not having any backlash against them on Long Island.

Because of the LIMFF, of the four Bishops of Diocese of Rockville Centre, I have been honored to be present at the installation ceremony of Bishop McHugh and Bishop Murphy and last rite of Bishop McGann and Bishop McHugh. I have been asked to give presentation at their TV station Tele Care and invited to many important events. Countless Indian organizations routinely became beneficiary of hosting their events at Catholic School auditoriums and facilities. So on behalf of many let me say big **THANK YOU** to Cardinal Tauran and many Catholic officials.

Towards the end I have few words for Jains and Non-Jains.

For the non – Jains please take these small goody bags with you which have some sweets, a symbolic token and the Essence of World Religions book. Also there is a calendar of Gandhi to promote peace as visualize by artworks of school students of Long Island. On a more important level, as Bishop of Manila indicated, the issues between religions are not a problem. They are dilemma and can be resolved with dialogues, so please talk and listen to people of other faith.

For the Jains present here, I take liberty here to emphasize the unique principle of Anekantvada. Please help and promote interfaith and multifaith activities. Less than 20 or so Jains over the last 25 years have made remarkable contributions without too much funds. Please contribute generously to JAINA Interfaith.

There are many, many thanks, I must conclude with but most important is to many Jain office bearers of this Temple starting with Kanubhai Doshi, Pareshbhai Shah, Dr. Sushil Jain, Dr. Gitaben Shah, Sharadbhai Doshi, Bhupesh Mehta and many others as well as, how can I forget, Dr. Cirelli and

Father Crossin of USCCB who extended their helping hands during my 4-5 visits to DC for this event.

We dream of a world free of violence, total freedom and conducive environment for all to achieve ultimate goal of your human life - to attain salvation of the soul.

JAIN like to say twice a day and too often and I said emphatically *Micchami Dukkadam*, please forgive me if I hurt anyone, anyway for and during this project.

With a cheerful disposition, allow me to address to his Eminence Cardinal Tauran that since your arrival at the beginning of this week in our neighborhood, you rightfully deserve credits for bringing good weather. And let me hasten to add that the presence of all others over here made it possible for having the best day today!!!