



INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS

ON

Sallekhanā / Santhārā / Samādhimarana / Prāyopaveśa
(Peaceful & Pious Death)

Partner University:

Loyola Marymount University 'LMU', Los Angeles, USA

Collaborating Universities:

National Law University 'NLU', Delhi, INDIA

University of Madras 'UM', Chennai, INDIA

Teerthanker Mahaveer University 'TMU', Moradabad, INDIA

University of Madras

18th-19th, February 2016
(Thursday-Friday)

National Law University

26th-27th, February 2016
(Friday-Saturday)

Teerthankar Mahavir University

5th, March 2016
(Saturday)

Support to presenters:

ISJS has set up a website on the subject where existing papers on the subject will be uploaded for access by the speakers for preparing their presentations. In addition to the information about the seminar. www.isjs.in/node/175

Presenters are requested to send an abstract of their paper latest by December 15th, 2015 for publishing a brochure for the seminar. The presenters also requested to send their papers by January 20th, 2016 for the seminar. The same will be updated after the last seminar.

Presenters will be given two tier return rail fare, boarding and lodging plus a reasonable honorarium.

ISJS also intends to publish the collection of selected papers in the form of a book.

International experts will be requested to participate either through Skype or personal presence as deemed fit by organizers.

Confirmed participants:

- **Foreigners:** Prof. Christopher K Chapple, Dr. Jayandra Soni, Dr. Whitney Braun, Prof. (Dr.) Nitin Shah, Prof. Gary L Francione, Mr. Purushottama Bilimoria and Dr. Sean Hillman.
- **Indian:** Dr. Manish Singhavi, Dr. D. S. Baya, Padma Bhushan Shri D. R. Mehta, Justice (Retd.) Pana Chand Jain, Prof. Priyadarshana Jain, Dr. Shugan C Jain, Dr. K. Gangwal.

As we expect large number of papers for presentation during the seminars. Kindly send your abstract as soon as possible to be considered for inclusion to

SECRETARIAL COORDINATOR FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL AT THE LIST

Organization of the Seminars:

1. Patrons:
Padma Bhushan Shri D. R. Mehta
Justice (Retd.) Pana Chand Jain
Prof. (Dr.) Nitin Shah
Prof. K. C. Sogani

2. Organizing Committee:

Dr. Shugan C Jain	Chairman, ISJS, INDIA
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Most religious leaders, sociologists, and other experts talk of the art of living a peaceful and happy life. Most doctors and scientists talk about and work to find ways to live a healthy, enjoyable and long life, often the boundaries are transgressed.

The eternal law of nature is that death is inevitable. One who is born has to die someday. Indian religions consider death as an event when the soul leaves its old body and moves on to a new body. When the body becomes old and weak or ill, and is unable to perform its daily chores and follow religious duties, a person naturally longs for the transition. The process is like changing of clothes after one's daily bath. Indian religious traditions encourage withdrawal (*nivṛtti*) from worldly activities and getting totally absorbed in God, or in one's own pure self while approaching death.

The right to "die with dignity," which sometimes entails euthanasia or "mercy killing" is being discussed internationally. A number of countries have legalized euthanasia with certain conditions. A few more countries are considering that the right to die be included in their constitutions. On the medical front, every day the number of people suffering in hospitals and kept alive on life support systems is increasing. This also enhances the suffering of families as it involves huge economic costs as well as psychological problems. This complex issue is indeed very sensitive as any solution proposed is prone to abuse and controversy.

Jain religious tradition extends the right to die voluntarily and peacefully for the sake of spiritual advancement. This is done under the supervision and guidance of a spiritually advanced person, usually a monk, or *acharya*, following strictly the procedure described in Jain scriptures. This practice is known as *Sallekhanā*, *Samādhibimaraṇa*, or *Santhārā*. It helps the embodied soul to transcend the body, weaken the bondage of *karma*, have better life after death, and ultimately get liberated.

Like retirement from our active work life, *Sallekhanā* starts by gradually withdrawing from worldly activities and increasing the diligence in the practice of the Jain code of conduct. This process can continue for a long period so that the opting person can devote full focus in meditation on the pure self without fear of death and attachment to life. This practice of volunteering for dying fearlessly and peacefully, free from worldly desires, as propagated by Jainism has become a subject matter of a very recent legal case and hot debate in the media, whereby

attempts are being made to equate *Sallekhanā* to suicide or forced death. Surprisingly it is also getting an international academic and media attention, as the issues concerning death are indeed universal with everyone looking for better solutions.

In recent court deliberations on the subject, the Rajasthan High Court has equated *Sallekhanā* with suicide, prosecutable under section 309 of the Indian Penal Code. This verdict has been stayed by India's Supreme Court. These actions have aroused serious concerns in the Jain community, which has united and joined hands to explain that the concept and practice of *Sallekhanā* is based on the principle of *ahimsā* and is an integral part of their religious practice. Their claim is that *Sallekhanā* is a process directed towards the conquest of fear of death, leading to peaceful death and a progressive step towards liberation. It is not suicide, which is differentiated by the scriptures also.

This raises a host of fundamental questions: 'Should choosing to die be treated as suicide? Under what conditions? Universally? Should suicide laws be applied to practices like *Sallekhanā-Santhārā* at all? What happens when religion allows a person to give up food and water and walk through the transition of death? Does the state have the right to intervene?' According to Jains, the question to be asked is, 'Who wants to die crying, or in pain or accidentally or even by committing suicide, the most horrifying act?' In contrast to the position taken in the contested decision of the Rajasthan High court, many researchers and regulators from western world are talking of euthanasia and of promoting *Sallekhanā* as an ideal way to assist patients during their last moments of life, where it has come to be regarded as an integral part of providing palliative care to the terminally ill.

In this context, the International School for Jain Studies (ISJS) is organizing academic and practical debates on all aspects such as:

a. Legal and Jurisprudential perspectives

- i. IPC Sections 306 (attempts to commit suicide) and 309 (abetment to suicide).
- ii. Colonial-era criminal laws vs. Indian Traditions and modern trends.
- iii. Constitutional precedents, like right to life and death; religious freedom of minorities and Articles 21, 25, 26, 29 of the Constitution of India.
- iv. Perspectives from the judicial systems.

b. Medical perspectives

- i. Applicability of the practice: Who and when one can start the practice? What are the benefits and pitfalls?
- ii. Applicability of the practice to solve some medical problems like reducing the pain and suffering of patients as preventive system, its usage in palliative care and patient care in general, as well as strategies to seek involvement of the family, medical practitioners and nursing/administrative staff as well as religious leaders in the decision making process.
- iii. Psychological distinction between the mental state of a person with suicidal tendency and a person going through the process of *Santhārā*.
- iv. Stretching life vs. Quality of life.
- v. Mental conditioning through lifelong practice of self-control, fasting, penance etc.

c. Social-political-economic perspectives

- i. Moral and ethical considerations, risks/gains, and dangers/benefits; social and individual perspectives.
- ii. Economic and marketing angle.
- iii. Effect of religious and ethnic diversity and approaches towards life and death in the globalized world
- iv. The contrast – Killing others vs. *Santhārā*
- V. Establish a code to differentiate it from suicide.

d. Religion / Faith based perspectives

- i. Jain religion:
 - ✓ Definitions of *Sallekhanā*, *Samādhimaranā* and *Santhārā* and doctrine in both Shvetambara and Digambara texts and practice. This will include investigation of motivations, types, milestones recognized in the process, duration of the final fast, and other issues.
 - ✓ Method of observance including who and when can one start this observance and who authorizes the same.
 - ✓ Is the practice one way or reversible?
 - ✓ Case studies from families with member/s who observed this practice as well as reflections from neighbours.
 - ✓ Field survey of those who observed this practice in last 50 years.
- ii. Perspectives on death in other religions (Hindu, Buddhist, Sikhism, Christianity, Islam). Their approaches will be compared and contrasted with Jainism. Specific sub sects of the practice in these religions will be examined.