

Candler Receives Gift to Endow Postdoctoral Fellowship in Jain Studies

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ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, June 17, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Candler School of Theology has received a \$1 million gift to establish an endowment to support a permanently funded postdoctoral fellowship. The Bhagawan



Arnath Postdoctoral Fellowship in Jain Studies will advance Candler's growing work in interfaith engagement and dialogue, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and the intersection of faith and ecology.

Candler began innovations in interfaith education for Christian leaders more than 25 years ago and has intensified this work in the last decade as religious diversity in the U.S. has continued to grow.

"Our mission is to educate faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries throughout the world," says Candler Dean Jan Love. "In order to be effective today, Christian leaders in churches and across society must engage religious diversity constructively. To acquire this skill, our students need opportunities to learn from instructors, immersive experiences, and peers of multiple faith traditions. We're delighted that this new postdoctoral fellowship will create more of these opportunities for Candler students."

Founded in India in the sixth century BC, Jainism is a religious tradition with tenets of nonviolence toward all living things, openness to many perspectives, and asceticism. The small group of donors who came together to create this endowment— Drs. Jasvant and Meera Modi, Harshad and Raksha Shah, and Dr. Jagdish and Madhu Sheth—believe that Jainism has much to contribute to the welfare of humanity by promoting nonviolence in today's work place, countering climate change by adopting a simple ascetic lifestyle, and cultivating more peaceful communities by encouraging the consideration of multiple view points and tolerance of others. Jasvant Modi, who has pledged \$13 million to establish [similar positions in multiple American](#)

[universities](#), adds that giving up excess material goods, those things above and beyond what we need, will “uplift all human beings.”

Donors Jagdish and Madhu Sheth have firsthand knowledge of Emory, where Jagdish is Charles H. Kellstadt Professor of Marketing at the Goizueta Business School, a position that gave him a window onto the interfaith work happening at Candler. He realized that Candler would be the right place to establish a Jain studies fellowship at Emory.

“We are honored to be able to support Candler School of Theology as they work to enhance interfaith cooperation. Candler’s strong track record in producing respected scholarship and its visible commitments to nonviolence, social justice, and the environment make it an institution worthy of our investment,” he says. “We look forward to a long and fruitful partnership, and are excited to see what research emerges from this fellowship.”

Jainism’s fundamental emphasis on nonviolence and living peaceably with one’s neighbors aligns well with multiple programs at Candler, particularly the Justice, Peacebuilding, and Conflict Transformation (JPACT) concentration, among the most popular master of divinity (MDiv) concentrations Candler offers. Plus, Candler’s location in Atlanta, the birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr.—one the most famous proponents of nonviolence—and hub of the civil rights movement, will enrich the dimensions of studying this shared aspect of Jainism and Christianity.

Enthusiasm around Candler’s recently established MDiv concentration in chaplaincy has also generated deeper discussion around interfaith engagement and peacebuilding. Today’s chaplains serve in many different contexts—not just hospitals or the military, but also in correctional facilities, at demonstrations and protests, at voting precincts on election days, and at private schools. Not only do chaplains need to navigate the different faith traditions they encounter, but also radically different ideological and philosophical viewpoints that can cause strife when they intersect. Jainism’s perspectives on peace and nonviolence can enhance students’ understanding and practical skills in this area.

Finally, Jainism’s deep reverence for nature and commitment to care for all living things dovetails with research interests among the faculty regarding faith and the environment as well as to students’ growing awareness of ecological concerns as part of their Christian faith commitments.

The Bhagawan Arnath Postdoctoral Fellow will teach two courses per year, one at Candler for master’s level students and another at the undergraduate level at Emory, while also furthering his or her own research and organizing lectures and events around Jain studies. Each fellowship runs for two years.

“Candler is delighted to establish this postdoctoral fellowship in Jain studies,” says Love. “Jains have long been advocates for interreligious cooperation and peaceful coexistence, modeling this

in their interactions with other religious traditions. Understanding the Jain approach will broaden our students' perspectives as they learn to provide Christian leadership in interfaith contexts."

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