

The Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago's (JSMC) Bartlett, Illinois temple celebrated a weeklong festival on the occasion of Birth Anniversary of Bhagwan Mahavir. The celebration started in a very spiritual manner where discourses by Shri Bhadrabahuji from Ahmedabad, India were arranged. Shri Bhadrabahuji is a revered person in the Jain world who has spent his entire life preaching the message of Bhagwan Mahavir. He was a Jain Muni (Monk) for 32 years in India before renouncing the monk hood to spread the teachings of Mahavir to the greater world.

Mahavir Jayanti is regarded as the one of the most important Jain festivals of the year and this year the actual Jayanti was on Wednesday April 4th, 2012. This marks the 2,611 years since the birth of the apostle of peace who is worldwide regarded as the founder of Jainism. Bhagwan Mahavir was born in 599 BC. He was the son of King Siddhartha and Queen Trishala. On the night of conception his mother, Trishala, had a dream depicting 14 different auspicious things. The Astrologers interpreted the auspicious dreams and predicted that the child would be either an emperor or a Tirthankar.

This being the first major event of the year, the Chairman of JSMC Board of Trustees (BOT) Arvind Shah, introduced the newly elected JSMC Office Bearers to the entire community. He also presented important information on the current and future initiatives undertaken by the team and shared the financial health of the society. He thanked all the Sponsors of the event for their contribution towards making this event a big success.

JSMC President, Tejas Shah, said that the entire Jain communities throughout the Chicago land area, Indiana, and Wisconsin celebrated Mahavir Jayanti here at the Bartlett Jain Temple. On this auspicious occasion the entire facility was beautifully decorated including the Pratimaji (Idol) of Mahavir Swami, the Main Deity at the Jain Temple of JSMC. He also took this opportunity to thank all the Volunteers for their Dedication and Unconditional Support to make this event a memorable one.

This year the Celebrations came at a very auspicious time of Ayambil Oli. Ayambil is a penance where the observer eats only once a day where a completely boiled Jain VEGAN menu is served. The Ayambil Oli is observed over a course of 9 days and this year they were in parallel to the Mahavir Jayanti celebrations. Almost 37 members observed penance for the entire 9 days and many more did it for a day or two. The end of Oli brought us right into the Fun part of the Celebrations.

On Saturday April 7th, a grand poojan of Shri Siddha Chakra was organized in the main Prayer Hall. Almost 50 families simultaneously performed the poojan that was attended by almost 500 Jains.

The evening started with the most sought after event, The MJ Cultural Night. The cultural team put together an electrifying show. It was attended by more than 2,500 people in the evening. The entire hall was full with people standing even on the sides to enjoy the show. About 250 kids and youths, from 3 yrs to 50 yrs in age, participated in this cultural show and presented a variety of artistic dance, garaba, classical bharat natyam, skit, band and chorus.

The morning of Sunday April 8th, 2012, started in a very spiritual way. A Digambar Mahavir Janma Jayanti Pooja was organized making sure that Jains from all walks of life were able to attend and take part in this spiritual journey. The Digambar Pooja was performed by almost 30 families and around 100 people attended the poojan.

In the afternoon the 14th annual declamation contest for various age groups was organized. About 72 students and members, the largest in the history of this contest, participated. Group1, Age 8 to 9, topic: "Being Jain Today and Tomorrow", winners are 1) Riya Jain, 2) Labdhi Jain & 3) Om Gandhi. Group 2, Age 10 to 13, topic: "If Bhagwan Mahavir were alive today", winners 1) Priya Shah, 2) Siddhi Jain & 3) Riya Shah. Group 3, Age 14 to 18, topic: "Power of forgiveness", winners 1) Anish Doshi, 2) Vinita Choradia, 3) Nemi Shah. Group 4, Age 19 and above, topic: Entrepreneurship – The Jain Way", 1) Neelam Jainl Shah, 2) Sejal Jain & 3) Reshma Shah.

Bhagawan Mahavir was a great teacher, his philosophies and teachings taught mankind the true path of happiness. His teachings of non-violence, importance of austerity and multitude views have shown us the path to achieve salvation and spirituality. The message though age old but is so relevant for the contemporary world that if we all follow our life on the path he showed us then achieving World Peace is not at all difficult.

Founded in 1970, the Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago (JSMC) is a non-profit tax exempt organization registered in State of Illinois and operating under IRC Title 26 U.S.C. 501(c), Section 501(c)(3) status.

JSMC has a membership of over 1,600 families, the largest membership representation of the Jain Centers in North America. JSMC is a proud member of the Federation of Jain Associations In North America (JAINA) and has a distinctive honor of having built in 1992 the first and the largest Jain Temple of North America in Bartlett, IL.