

## Press Release

Monday May 28th marks the launch of the University of Mumbai's Centre for Jain Studies (CJS)'s 3.5 week Summer School in Jaina Studies, specifically designed for foreign students. The initiative is being undertaken with the University of Ottawa, in Canada, which has sent 14 students to participate in the inaugural programme.

The students' backgrounds are varied (Religious Studies, Philosophy, Sociology) and their knowledge of Jaina Studies covers the full spectrum: some possessing only a rudimentary knowledge, while others have already pursued graduate studies in the field. All possess an avid interest in South Asian Studies.

Jaina Studies remains an understudied subject in the universities outside of India, and yet the interest in the tradition is steadily growing. The course hopes to capitalize on this positive trend by providing students with a comprehensive programme in an academic setting. The CJS, now in its 17th year, is well placed to offer such a rigorously academic, non-sectarian programme in Jaina Studies. Further, the CJS is distinctive in its insistence on approaching Jainism as part of the broader religious landscape of India, sharing much with its Hindu and Buddhist co-religionists. By studying Jainism as a one thread, albeit a distinctive very significant one, in the tapestry of Indian religiosity, the scope of the field is enlarged. Knowledge of Jainism would come to be seen as vital to South Asian studies.

Dr Kamini Gogri of the University of Mumbai's CJS and Dr Anne Vallely of the University of Ottawa's Department of Religious Studies are the principal catalysts for the creation of this course. They are ambitious about its future, hoping that the programme will eventually expand to include a language component, bilateral graduate student exchanges, and visiting lectureships between the two universities. It is their long term goal to establish the CJS as an international centre for excellence in Jaina Studies.