

Press Release
7th Jan, 2016

K. J. Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies inaugurated its rural outreach program Jetavan, at Sakarwadi, Kopergaon, Maharashtra.

K. J. Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies, a Somaiya Vidyavihar institute, announced the launch of Jetavan, a non-sectarian centre for spiritual practice and holistic development at Sakarwadi, Kopergaon.

Jetavan is an outreach project of the K. J. Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies. The project is inspired by the compassion of Ven. Dhammadiya, a Buddhist monk from the Czech Republic and built in partnership Godavari Biorefineries Ltd, the flagship company of the Somaiya group,

Jetavan will be a non-sectarian centre that will encourage spiritual practice and physical wellness among the local community at Sakarwadi. In addition, vocational training programmes will also be conducted to assist youngsters develop livelihood skills and achieve financial independence. Jetavan reflects our commitment at Somaiya Vidyavihar to underscore citizenship and community service, even as we provide avenues for career building to young students.

Jetavan, with an aim to contribute towards the development of the community at Sakarwadi, will host a variety of programs and gatherings - from diverse spiritual teachings to vocational training workshops. The program will be managed by K J Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies and implemented together with the various institutes of Somaiya Vidyavihar including its institutes teaching Sanskrit, Jainism, Yoga, and Vocational Training. Programs will be conducted under the guidance of academic experts.

Godavari Biorefineries Limited, the flagship company of the Somaiya Group, has provided land and funds for development of Jetavan and will continue to support the project as part of its community development program. GBL has supported the Buddhist community in the area by providing space for a library and earmarking a compound for community gatherings. Godavari Biorefineries has been engaged in community outreach at its locations in Maharashtra and Karnataka from inception and this experience will be invaluable in programming at Jetavan.

Says Samir Somaiya, President Somaiya Vidyavihar "For us, Jetavan, is our way of giving back to Society. Both GBL and Somaiya Vidyavihar have been working with the community in various ways. The aim of this initiative is to respond to the twin needs of the community at Sakarwadi – that of spiritual guidance and the need to improve economic well being. Education in spiritual knowledge and human values provides people of all backgrounds an opportunity to inculcate positive thoughts and attitudes. The spirit of inclusiveness, co-operation and warmth at Jetavan will make a qualitative change in their lives. At Somaiya Vidyavihar, we have education institutions that teach the academic study of

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism in an inclusive and progressive manner. We are very happy to make this available to the people in and around Sakarwadi. The construction and architecture represents our commitment to the environment.”

The Chief Guest Ven. Dhammadipa conducted the inauguration ceremony which featured recitation of Buddhist chants, blessings by priests of various faiths amongst songs by children. Many of the community members and devotees joyfully and enthusiastically took part in the proceedings.

Says Ven. Dhammadipa, Jetavan is the result of the kindness and generosity of several people from India, China, Taiwan, Spain, USA, Germany and Czech. They have opened their hearts for the benefit of the community at Sakarwadi for the practice of the Dharma. I hope that the community in turn opens their hearts to receive this gift and make the project a success.

Jetavan has been designed by Sameep Padora and Associates an internationally awarded architectural firm from Mumbai. The complex was built by artisans from Hunnarshala Foundation from Bhuj in collaboration with the local construction teams. It has been constructed using natural materials and waste materials, so as to reduce the carbon footprint to the barest minimum possible. The constructions materials represent several innovations – such as use of quarry dust and fly ash (which is waste from the factory) to build the walls. 16 tons of old, used wood from the ship-breaking yard at Alang, Gujarat was used for the roof under-structure, over which mud-rolls have been placed. Old, used Mangalore tiles were then placed on top. The mud-rolls will ensure comfort in terms of temperature in the interiors. The roof is inverted, so that light comes in at an angle from the top and those inside the building can only see tree tops and the sky outside.

Activities planned at Jetavan

1. A large hall will serve for meditation practice and for religious ceremonies. Ven Dhammadipa will travel to Sakarwadi once every couple of years to personally guide meditation practice and deliver teachings from Buddhist texts. K J Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies will draw upon its connections in diverse Buddhist traditions to invite members of the Sangha to Jetavan for Dharma teachings.
2. Buddhist Centre faculty and students from the various courses will help conduct courses on Pali language and texts as also introductory courses on Buddhism that explain the history and philosophical aspects of this great Indian tradition.
3. Faculty and students from K J Somaiya Bhartiya Sanskriti Peetham and the K J Somaiya Centre for Studies in Jainism will read and explain texts and encourage discussion and debate on spiritual development in a supportive environment.
4. Recognising that economic growth is a primary concern, Somaiya Vidyavihar will support training programs for local youth in vocational skills –



such as carpentry. There will also be training provided in matters of simple hygiene and health care.

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