The World Honors You, Acharya Sushil Kumar Ji
Category : June 1994
Published by Anonymous on Jun. 01, 1994

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Revered Jain Saint and Global Peacemaker Passes on at 68

On April 22, 1994 at his New Delhi ashram, His Holiness Acharya Sushil Kumar Ji Maharaj, one of this century's most prominent international peace workers, head of the International Mahavir Jain Mission (IMJM) had returned from early afternoon meetings uneasy, complaining of internal pains. P.N. Jain reports, "He continued meeting visitors until 3:00 pm, then retired to his room and complained of severe pain. A doctor was summoned. Guruji sat on his bed in the lotus position. He bent forward in that position, leaning his head into a pillow and entered Mahasamadhi a little before 4:00 pm. The mortal being was kept in state until April 25th. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, the President, almost the entire cabinet and scores of spiritual and religious leaders came to have darshan. A procession was taken through Delhi starting at 10:00 am, joined by an estimated 500,000 people. At about 5:45 pm, the pyre was lit amidst chanting of sacred prayers.

"Messages have been pouring in from all over the world. On May 1st at Siddhachalam in New Jersey over 1,000 people attended a Prarthana Sabha, prayer service, to have darshan of the kalasha (urn) containing Guruji's ashes." P.N. Jain, who is of the Western headquarters, Siddhachalam, Blairstown, New Jersey, told Hinduism Today that the ashes were divided into two portions and that two samadhi shrines are proposed-one at Siddhachalam, another at Acharya Sushil Ashram, New Delhi. Regarding the leadership succession, a US trustee, Pannalal Jain, informed Hinduism Today, "There is no successor. The board of trustees will take charge of the mission and conduct activities in accordance with the principles laid down by Acharya Sushil Kumar Ji Maharaj."

VHP Eulogies and Praise

Gaurang G. Vaishnav, General Secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of

America, sent this eulogy to Hinduism Today, "We are extremely grieved to hear the news of the passing away of Acharya Sushil Kumar Ji Maharaj. Muniji was an example of hard work, dedication to a cause and selfless service. While upholding the values of the Tirthankaras, he strived for a pragmatic approach to the various issues faced by society. We are doubly saddened by Sushil Kumarji's departure because he was the last founding member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Bharat. In the USA, he was an ardent supporter, friend and counsel of VHP America. He allowed generous use of the Siddhachalam facilities for our camps. He helped the VHP of America with his deep insight of ethical values, gracing many of our programs and giving guidance.

"Acharya Sushil Kumarji's death is only a physical death; he will stay alive for years in the hearts of his disciples and his work will continue to flourish for generations. We pray to God for taking this gentle soul in His refuge and grant him eternal peace."

Life of a Peacemaker

Guruji was born into a brahmin family on June 15, 1926, in the village of Shikpur, Haryana, India. Leaving home at the age of seven to live with Shri Chotelalji Maharaj, Guruji was once visited, in spirit, by His Holiness Roopchandji Maharaj. That yogi, who had left the body a century earlier, appeared and told the boy he was destined to become a monk.

Muniji's dedication to peace and religious cooperation was his lifetime achievement. He worked unceasingly to establish a sense of universal brotherhood among India's religious traditions. He successfully motivated the late Sikh leader Tara Singh to participate in an open, peaceful dialogue with the government. In 1986, when the late Akali leader Sant Longowal and the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi were attempting to solve the Punjab problem, Guruji convinced the terrorist groups of the Punjab to honor their compromise with the government. He also convinced Muslim leaders to negotiate with Hindu saints until a consensus was reached in the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue in 1990-91. From 1954 to 1993, Guruji organized and presided over numerous world religion conferences. Well known for his unprecedented international tours, in 1982 he inspired leaders of eight nations to submit a memorandum demanding peace through non-violence to the UN. He was a board member of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, the Temple of Understanding and the Global Forum for Human Survival. In 1991 he

went to Iran to persuade Saddam Hussein to adopt a peaceful resolution to the Gulf crisis! Guruji founded the World Movement of Non-Violence for Peace and Environment which was launched in Rio in 1992. Even though he hailed from that sect of the Jain's which does not believe in idol worship, he was instrumental in the establishment of numerous Jain and Hindu-Jain temples in North America.

He established Siddhachalam, the International Mahavir Jain Mission western headquarters and the first Jain ashram outside India. Our editors will never forget this self-effacing, gentle mystic who always spoke of the deepest Truths in gatherings where others focused on mundane solutions to the human predicament. He knew it was spiritual knowledge that people need most, and he gave it everytime, everwhere.