JCP JOURNAL OF CREATIVE PERSPECTIVES

United Jain Students' Home, Sion: A Century of Jain Educational Philanthropy in Bombay/Mumbai, 1917–2022

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Abstract

The United Jain Students' Home (UJSH), founded in Bombay in 1917 and rebuilt on its present Sion campus between 1952 and 1971, is, by its own account, one of the oldest surviving Jain student hostels in the city and among the few founded explicitly to serve students of every Jain sect rather than one alone. This article traces the institution's history against the wider backdrop of Jain migration into western India, the colonial formation of Bombay, and the growth of Western education in the city, before examining UJSH's founding, its funding and expansion, its present facilities, and its centenary renovation completed in 2022. Drawing on the hostel's own magazine and renovation report (both institutional sources), site visits, and a small digital survey of twenty resident students, the study reconstructs the institution's history as the hostel itself records it and finds, on the limited evidence of the survey, that UJSH continues to attract residents from across India, even as most respondents feel the institution still has room to improve. The study is limited by the near-total absence of independent published material on the hostel, which meant that internal sources and first-hand observation had to substitute for archival triangulation. Claims about the hostel's founding, funding, and alumni therefore rest on the institution's own account. The article closes by arguing that UJSH offers a useful, under-documented case of community-funded educational philanthropy in twentieth-century Bombay/Mumbai.

Keywords: Jain community; educational philanthropy; student hostels; Bombay/Mumbai history; Western education in India; institutional history

Introduction

The United Jain Students' Home (UJSH) is a long-standing student hostel located on United Jain Student Home Road, Jain Society, Sion (West), Mumbai. Its present building underwent a major renovation completed in 2022, and the institution marked the centenary of its founding in 2017. This article examines how the hostel came into being, how it changed after its recent renovation, and what role the wider Jain community has played in building and sustaining it over more than a century.

UJSH has long provided its resident students with low-cost housing, food, and study facilities, and the present study asks four connected questions: when and by whom the institution was established; why it was established; how Jainism itself emerged and later divided into its two principal sects; and how the city of Bombay, and Western education within it, developed to the point where an institution of this kind became necessary. Alongside these historical questions, the article also considers three subsidiary themes: the contribution of the Jain community to the Indian economy, the educational institutions that helped make Bombay/Mumbai a hub of higher education, and the geographical distribution of the Jain population across India.

The article proceeds as follows. It first reviews the limited literature available on UJSH specifically. It then sets out the study's research methodology before turning to three bodies of historical background: the origins and westward migration of Jainism, the colonial formation of Bombay, and the growth of Western education in the city. It then narrates the institutional history of UJSH itself, from its founding in 1917 through its present-day structure and its 2016–2022 renovation. Finally, it presents findings from a resident-student survey, discusses the study's limitations, and concludes with an assessment of UJSH's significance as a case of Jain community philanthropy in Bombay/Mumbai.

Literature Review

Literature on Jainism's history and demography in India is comparatively well developed, and this study draws on it to situate UJSH within a broader religious and social context. Key general works consulted include Chatterjee's (2000) two-volume history of Jainism, Jash (1989) on Jainism in eastern India, Sangave (1980) on the Jain community as a social formation, Jain (2011) on Jains in India and abroad, Dundas (2002) on Jain philosophy and practice, and Zykov (2020) on Jain migration and religious movement. Region-specific material, including Sanglikar (2009) on the history of Jainism in Maharashtra and CM (2020) on the Jain community's contribution to the Indian economy, was used to trace the community's westward migration and its later economic role in Bombay.

Bombay's colonial and institutional history draws principally on Hunt and Stern's (2021) account of the city's formation as a global imperial port, supplemented by contemporary and near-contemporary sources such as Hamilton (1727), Forrest (1887), and British Library India Office Records, and by secondary studies of Bombay's scientific and educational institutions, including Chattopadhyaya (2011), Chakrabarti (2012), Ghosh (2013), Kulkarni (2014), and Gupchup (2014).

On UJSH itself, however, the available literature is very thin. The single substantive source is the hostel's own magazine, published in Gujarati, which recounts the institution's founding, its early committees, and its subsequent building funds; this study draws on it as its principal primary source, alongside the hostel's 2022 renovation and refurbishment project report. Both documents were produced by the hostel's own management and are treated here as the institution's account of itself, not as independent evidence: wherever this article relies on

them, the text says so, while the wider context (Jain migration, the formation of Bombay, and its educational institutions) is drawn separately from external published sources. No independently published book, journal article, or newspaper account dealing specifically with UJSH could be located, which is itself a notable gap given the institution's age and its place within Bombay's Jain community. In the near-total absence of secondary literature on the hostel, this study also relies on site visits, photographic documentation, and a digital survey of resident students, described in the following section.

Research Methodology

This study combines qualitative and quantitative methods. A digital survey was administered to residents of UJSH to learn how they viewed the hostel and how important it was to their daily lives; twenty students responded. Photographs of the hostel's facilities, including its mess, guest rooms, library, students' rooms, and sanitation blocks, were taken, examined, and used to supplement the written description of the building. Secondary material — existing books, journals, and articles on Jainism, Bombay, and Western education in India — was used to place the hostel's history within its wider social and urban context, following primarily descriptive, historical, sociocultural, and economic lines of enquiry.

Data Collection

Data collection proceeded along four lines. First, repeated site visits were carried out over the course of the research, made possible by the researcher's own residence at the hostel, allowing sustained observation of its history, layout, and residents. Second, photographs were taken of the hostel's principal spaces to provide visual evidence that written description alone could not fully capture, including changes visible after the 2016–2022 renovation. Third, a structured digital survey of seven questions was circulated to resident students, covering their state of origin, their college or programme of study, and their views on the hostel, including whether it could still be improved following its recent renovation. The timing, sampling, and consent procedures for the survey are described in the next subsection. Fourth, all survey responses, photographs, and material drawn from the hostel magazine were documented as written notes and treated as the principal evidentiary record for the study. Oral interviews with hostel officials could not be arranged, which increased the study's reliance on the hostel's own literary sources and on the researcher's direct observation.

Survey Design, Sampling, and Consent

The survey was intended as a supplementary source, used only to describe the profile of the hostel's current residents and their general impressions of it; it was not used to establish the hostel's history, which rests on the documentary sources described above. The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms in March 2023. Respondents were selected at random from among the more than 100 residents then living in the hostel, and twenty responded. Because the sample is small relative to the resident body, its results are treated as indicative rather than statistically representative. Because the researcher is himself a resident of the hostel, some respondents may have known him personally, which may have influenced how they answered.

The survey was anonymous: no names or other personal identifiers were collected, and none appear anywhere in this article. The hostel management permitted the survey to be conducted. Before taking part, participants were told the purpose of the survey and their permission to participate was obtained; they were also informed that their identities would be

kept confidential. Participation was therefore based on informed, voluntary consent, and the survey involved no sensitive personal questions.

Analysis and Ethical Statement

Data from the survey, photographs, and literary sources were compiled and cross-read to build a composite picture of the hostel's history and present character. Throughout, the hostel magazine and renovation report are treated as institutional sources whose claims are reported as the institution's own account; where a claim could be checked against an external source this is indicated, and where it could not, the text says so. Survey responses were summarised descriptively as counts and percentages, and no inferential statistics were attempted given the sample size. The consent and ethical arrangements for the survey are set out in the preceding subsection. No funding was received for the study; because the researcher resided at the hostel, site visits carried no additional cost. The author declares that this article reflects original research and analysis that has not been previously published and is not under consideration elsewhere.

Historical Background

Origins and Westward Migration of Jainism

The sixth century BCE was a period of considerable religious and philosophical ferment across northern India, centred on the region of Magadha, out of which a number of movements arose in opposition to prevailing ritual practice. Of these, only Jainism and Buddhism endured as major independent traditions. Jain tradition holds its religion to be the oldest in India, identifying Rishabhdeva as the first Tirthankara — a figure also named in the Rigveda, the Vishnu Purana, and the Bhagavata Purana (CM, 2020).

Jain monks are recorded travelling through Maharashtra toward south India as early as the third century BCE. The earliest surviving epigraphic evidence of a Jain presence in Maharashtra is a Prakrit inscription in Brahmi script, opening with the line Namo Arhanta Nam, found in a Jain cave at Pale in Pune district along the ancient route through the Naneghat pass; scholars including Sankalia have dated it to the second century BCE (Sanglikar, 2009). Later tradition associates this southward migration with the monk Bhadrabahu, the last of the śrutakevalins, who is said to have led a group of Jains south during a twelve-year famine; his follower, said to be the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta, is described as abdicating his throne to travel with them, with the migration terminating around Shravanabelagola in present-day Karnataka, from where Jainism is thought to have spread further into Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala (Sramana, 2013).

The Jain Community in Contemporary India

Jainism is India's sixth-largest religion. According to the 2011 Census, the country's approximately 4.45 million Jains were concentrated principally in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh, with the sacred pilgrimage site of Shikharji, in Jharkhand, also supporting a smaller Jain population of roughly 16,300. Table 1 summarises the changing share of major religious communities in India between the 2001 and 2011 censuses.

Sl. No.	Religion	Pop. (cr.)	2011 (%)	2001 (%)	Growth 2001–11
1	Hindu	96.62	79.80	80.50	16.8
2	Muslims	17.22	14.22	13.40	24.6
3	Christians	2.78	2.20	2.30	15.5

Sl. No.	Religion	Pop. (cr.)	2011 (%)	2001 (%)	Growth 2001–11
4	Sikhs	2.08	1.72	1.90	8.4
5	Buddhists	0.84	0.70	0.80	5.4
6	**Jains**	**0.45**	**0.38**	**0.40**	**6.1**
7	Others	0.79	0.68	0.70	6.1
8	Not Stated	0.29	0.30	–	–
	Total	121.09	100	100	

Table 1. Percentage of the population by religious community in India, 2001 and 2011 censuses. Source: Government of India, Census reports 2001 and 2011.

At the state level, Jains are concentrated in six states — Maharashtra (1.2%), Gujarat (1%), Delhi (1%), Rajasthan (0.9%), Madhya Pradesh (0.8%), and Karnataka (0.7%) — which together accounted for 56 per cent of the community's roughly 4.5 million members recorded in 2011. Jains are divided principally into the Śvētāmbara and Digambara sects; members of the latter have historically been concentrated in agriculture and small business and have experienced comparatively higher rates of poverty, while the former has been more closely associated with commerce (Desai, n.d.). Central to Jain philosophy is the doctrine of karma, by which present and past actions, rather than a creator deity, are held to govern rebirth; the passions that generate karmic bondage — anger, pride, deceit, and greed — are to be restrained through the three jewels of right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct (the Ratnatraya) (CM, 2020).

Bombay's Colonial Formation

Bombay's transformation from a scattered archipelago into a major imperial port is often told as beginning with its 1661 transfer to the English crown as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza, and its subsequent grant to the East India Company. At the time of the English takeover, the seven-island archipelago was little more than a collection of fishing villages, Portuguese estates, and scattered churches; it would be several decades before contemporaries began routinely describing it as a "city" at all (Hunt and Stern, 2021).

The settlement's early growth was repeatedly interrupted by military crisis. The most severe was the 1689–90 siege, in which the Mughal commander Sidi Yakut Khan, provoked by the Company's seizure of grain shipments, landed a large force on the archipelago and overran all but Bombay Castle itself, holding the town for some sixteen months. The siege killed or drove away the great majority of Bombay's English residents — of seven or eight hundred living there before the war, fewer than sixty were said to remain by its end — while food shortages, bombardment, and plague further depleted the garrison (Hamilton, 1727; Hunt and Stern, 2021).

In the decades that followed, the Company invested heavily in Bombay's fortifications and administration, completing a semicircular defensive wall by 1716, confiscating Catholic and Portuguese landholdings it regarded as security risks, and undertaking land-reclamation works to close the tidal "breaches" through which the Sidi force had originally entered (Watson, 1980; Riding, 2018). Persistent threats from the Maratha naval commander Kanhoji Angre and, later, French naval power in the eighteenth century, kept defence a continuing preoccupation, prompting further engineering works such as the levelling of Mendham's Point cemetery and of Dongri Hill to improve the town's field of fire (Burnell, 1706). By the mid-eighteenth century, Bombay had been substantially rebuilt as a fortified, single contiguous island, laying the physical

and administrative foundations from which it would later grow into modern Mumbai, one of the world's largest metropolitan regions and a widely cited example of a "gateway" global city.

Western Education and the Growth of Educational Institutions in Bombay

Company Policy and the Foundations of Western Education

India possessed an ancient and well-developed indigenous education system, historically centred on great centres of learning such as Nalanda, Vallabhi, and Taxila, and later sustained locally through Hindu pathshalas and Muslim madrasas. Political upheaval through the eighteenth century weakened this system, and after acquiring political power following the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company's Board of Directors initially left education to private initiative. Company policy shifted after 1765, as the Company began founding academic institutions of its own, partly to train the sons of influential Indians for administrative roles and partly to secure elite goodwill; institutions such as the Banaras Sanskrit College and the Calcutta madrasa reflected an early "Orientalist" approach that sought to work within, rather than displace, existing scholarly traditions.

Scientific and Technical Education in Bombay

In Bombay specifically, education developed within a Presidency shaped more by mercantile interest than by the administrative concerns that dominated Calcutta or Madras. The University of Bombay, founded in 1857, functioned for decades chiefly as an examining and degree-granting body rather than a teaching institution, and scientific and technical education remained marginal until the outbreak of the First World War created urgent demand for trained scientists and technologists. Institutions such as the Plague Research Laboratory, founded by Waldemar Haffkine in 1899, and the Royal Institute of Science, first proposed in 1903 and finally opened in 1920 under Governor George Clarke, emerged from this gradually building momentum (Chattopadhyaya, 2011; Chakrabarti, 2012).

Learned societies played a comparable role. The Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, formed in 1826 from the earlier Literary Society of Bombay (1804), initially concentrated on antiquarian, philological, and archaeological interests before natural history and scientific collecting expanded under figures such as Sir George Birdwood, whose work at Grant Medical College and with the city's Central Museum fed into the later Victoria and Albert Industrial Museum, opened in 1872 (Gupchup, 2014). By the early twentieth century, seven institutions anchored scientific and educational life in the Presidency: the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1804), the University of Bombay (1857), the Victoria and Albert Industrial Museum (1871/1872), the Bombay Natural History Society (1883), the Haffkine Institute (1899), the Royal Institute of Science (1920), and the Prince of Wales Museum (1922).

Pre-Independence Colleges in Bombay

Alongside these scientific institutions, a number of colleges founded in the nineteenth century established Bombay as a hub of Western higher education. Elphinstone College, named for the Governor Mountstuart Elphinstone, became a full college in 1856 and affiliated with the University of Bombay in 1860. Wilson College traces its origins to a native English school founded by the Scottish missionary John Wilson in 1832, gaining a college department in 1836 and moving to Chowpatty in 1889; it was notable for admitting students of all castes. St. Xavier's College, growing out of the earlier St. Mary's Institution and St. Xavier's High School, affiliated with Bombay University in January 1869. Sydenham College, established through the efforts of Sir Dinshaw Wacha and others, took its name in 1916 and moved into its present premises in

1955 (Admin, 2017). It was into this expanding but still exclusive landscape of Bombay higher education that the idea of a dedicated, cross-sectarian Jain student hostel emerged.

The United Jain Students' Home: Institutional History

A note on sources. Unless another source is cited, the account in this section is drawn from two institutional documents: the hostel's Gujarati-language magazine and its Renovation and Refurbishment Project Report. Both were produced by or for the hostel and present its own version of its history. Dates, sums raised, the names of founders, donors, and alumni, and the account of the 1917 inauguration are therefore reported here as the institution's own record; none could be checked against independent archival, press, or published sources, and the text marks such claims with phrases such as "according to the hostel magazine". By contrast, background on the locality of Sion is drawn from external web sources, and the wider context in the preceding sections from published scholarship.

Founding, 1915–1917

Sion, where UJSH now stands, came under Portuguese control in 1543 and was renamed after the biblical Mount Zion when Jesuit priests built a chapel on a hill near the present railway station; it later marked the boundary between Bombay and Salsette Island and is today administered by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation within Mumbai City district (Wikipedia, n.d.; Housing.com, n.d.).

The idea of a Jain student hostel emerged from a wider movement of Jain educational reform in the early twentieth century. According to the hostel magazine, existing sectarian institutions — Shri Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya, founded in Bombay in 1915 with the consent of Muni Shri Nyayavijayji, and comparable institutions at Mahuva and Palitana — served only students of particular sects, chiefly the Digambara or Śvētāmbara communities individually. In response, the reformers Vadilal Motilal Shah and Manilal Mokamchand Shah promoted a broader institution, Shri Samyukta Jain Vidyarthi Griha, intended to serve Jain students of every sect, on the conviction that education for the young, rather than deference to the old, was the foundation of social progress; the magazine presents this cross-sectarian ambition as unusual in a community still organised strongly along sectarian lines (United Jain Students' Home Magazine, n.d.).

According to the hostel magazine, the institution was formally inaugurated on 24 June 1917 at Pirbhai Mansion on Princess Street (present-day Shamaldas Gandhi Marg), Bombay, by Thakore Sahib Naharsinhji of Jhalawar. The inauguration was attended by, among others, Mahatma Gandhi, Mr H.S.L. Polak (a fellow of Gandhi's Ashram in South Africa), the poet Nanalal Dalpatram Kavi, and Krishnalal Mohanlal Zaveri. Attendance at the ceremony is reported only in the magazine and has not been corroborated against independent sources such as contemporary press reports. Speakers at the ceremony, including Vadilal Motilal Shah and Muni Manisagarji, framed the institution's purpose explicitly around education, sectarian unity, and service; the inaugurating patron urged the assembled community to direct its wealth toward education rather than intra-community dispute. The institution's first advisory committee included figures such as Acharya Anandshankar Dhruv, the social reformer Amritlal Thakkar ("Thakkar Bapa"), Ranchhodbhai Udayram, and Kanaiyalal Munshi (United Jain Students' Home Magazine, n.d.).

Consolidation and Growth, 1917–1954

According to the hostel magazine, from 1917 to 1948, the institution was administered under a scheme sanctioned by the Bombay High Court, housing around 400 students at Pirbhai

Mansion on capital of roughly ₹56,000, with running costs met from interest on this fund. Demand grew sharply during and after the Second World War, and by the late 1940s the institution could no longer accommodate the number of qualified students seeking admission. One of its founders, Mangaldas Mulchand Chheda, initiated a building fund with a personal deposit of ₹10,000, and Manilal Mokamchand Shah subsequently led a door-to-door fundraising campaign that raised roughly ₹24 lakh across the Jain community. A constitution committee was formed once funds had been secured, and its draft constitution was formally adopted by the general body on 3 August 1949 (United Jain Students' Home Magazine, n.d.).

Land initially purchased near Dadar station, close to the technical institutes of the Dadar–Matunga area, was frustrated by its inclusion in a town-planning scheme that barred construction, forcing the institution to acquire land in Sion instead. Construction on the Sion plot, designed to house seventy-five students, began on Baisakhi, 21 May 1952. Manilal Mokamchand Shah, the campaign's principal fundraiser, died on 25 July 1952 before the building's completion; the community subsequently raised a Manilal Mokamchand Shah Smriti Fund of roughly ₹25,311 in his memory, and a further donation of ₹25,000, along with ₹5,001 to establish a library, was secured from Kapurchand Nemchand Mehta to close the resulting funding gap. The completed building, accommodating seventy-five students, was inaugurated on 25 July 1954 by the then Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Kanaiyalal Munshi (United Jain Students' Home Magazine, n.d.).

Expansion to the Present Sion Campus

By the 1950s, Pirbhai Mansion accommodated forty students and the new Sion building seventy-four, but demand continued to outstrip capacity as the Sion–Matunga area became host to a growing number of arts, engineering, technical, medical, and commerce colleges. In response, the managing committee constructed a second building on an adjoining plot, adding a further seventy-five places; this extension, forming what is today known as Shri C.U. Shah Bhavan, was inaugurated on 11 July 1971 by C.U. Shah, who along with C.N. Sanghvi was himself an alumnus of the institution. Notable alumni recorded in the hostel's own history include Mahadev Desai, personal secretary to Mahatma Gandhi; Manilal Chaturbhai Shah, a former Deputy Minister in the central government and Chief Minister of Gujarat; and Amritlal Dalpatbhai Sheth, a former Minister of External Affairs (their association with the hostel is attested only in the hostel's own history) (United Jain Students' Home Magazine, n.d.).

Governance decisions over this period also reflected the institution's founding ethos of inclusion. At the Sion foundation ceremony, Manilal Mokamchand Shah expressed the wish that the institution, already open to students of all Jain sects, be extended further to admit deserving non-Jain students; a general meeting held on 10 March 1956 under Chimanlal Chakubhai Shah duly resolved to admit deserving students without regard to sect (United Jain Students' Home Magazine, n.d.).

Present-Day Structure and Facilities

On the researcher's own observation and photographic documentation, the present Shri C.U. Shah Bhavan is a rectangular, four-storey building. Its ground floor houses students' rooms, the dining mess, a waiting room, a sports room, the warden's office, and a gymnasium; the first and second floors are given over to students' rooms, each floor served by communal bathrooms on both sides of the building; and the third floor holds the terrace and a library equipped with air conditioning to allow study through Mumbai's humid climate. Individual rooms are furnished with a bed, desk, and cupboard, with communal bathroom and kitchen facilities shared across each floor.

UJSH's food service is entirely vegetarian and prepared in accordance with Jain dietary principles, avoiding meat, fish, and eggs in keeping with the Jain emphasis on non-violence; meals are served in a common dining hall that doubles as a space for social interaction among residents. The hostel also provides gym access at no additional charge, a canteen offering tea and snacks, and financial assistance in the form of scholarships and other aid intended to ease the burden of tuition and living costs for Jain students. Overall hostel fees remain below ₹50,000 per year, low by the standards of student housing in Mumbai. The fee figure is based on the researcher's own experience as a resident who pays the fees himself, and is consistent with the fee structure published on the hostel's website. The comparison with other Mumbai student housing draws on the researcher's review of other hostels' websites and visits to some of them, and is therefore indicative rather than a systematic survey of hostel fees.

The Centenary Renovation Project, 2016–2022

UJSH marked the centenary of its founding in 2017, and the Trustees and Managing Committee, in collaboration with the Students' Home Alumni Trust, undertook an ambitious renovation to coincide with the anniversary. As described in the hostel's own project report, the building comprises two distinct sections: a twenty-room block built in 1962, which required only routine maintenance, and a twenty-three-room extension built in 1970, whose civil structure had deteriorated substantially and required strengthening of columns and beams. Fifty-two columns, along with associated beams, were reinforced from ground level to the second floor during the summer of 2016. Bathing areas and toilet blocks across all floors were rebuilt to modern sanitation standards, the interiors of all forty rooms were renovated, the sports room, visitors' room, library, dining area, and kitchen were upgraded, the ground-floor pavement was resurfaced, and the building's exterior was repainted (Renovation and Refurbishment Project Report, n.d.). The project was completed in 2022, giving the hostel both a contemporary appearance and updated amenities.

Findings and Discussion

The digital survey of twenty resident students provides only a small snapshot of who the hostel currently serves and how residents view its recent renovation. Sixty-five per cent of respondents reported coming from Maharashtra, with the remainder drawn from Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Rajasthan (Figure 1), suggesting that while the hostel draws heavily on the local Jain population, it continues to attract students from other states, which is consistent with the aim, recorded in the hostel's own history, of serving Jain students regardless of sect or region. The survey did not ask about respondents' sect, so it cannot show whether the hostel still serves students of every Jain sect; that claim rests on the hostel's records alone. Respondents reported enrolment across a wide range of institutions and programmes — including engineering colleges such as Shah and Anchor Kutchhi Engineering College and Thadomal Shahani Engineering College, commerce and arts colleges such as SIES College, K.C. College, and H.R. College, and management institutes such as the Welingkar Institute — suggesting that, among those who responded, the hostel supports students across disciplines rather than any single field of study.

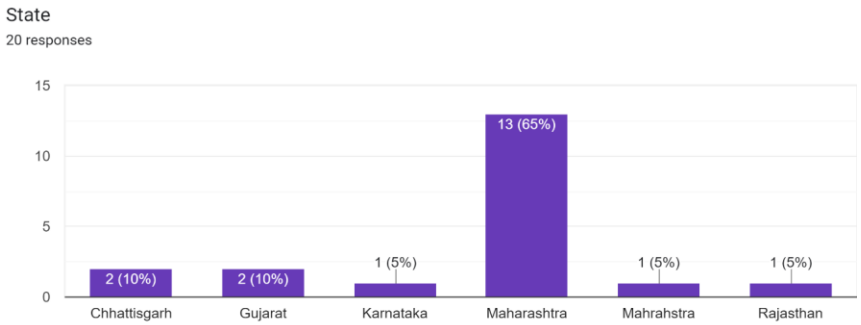


Figure 1. State of origin of UJSH resident students surveyed (n = 20). Source: author's survey.

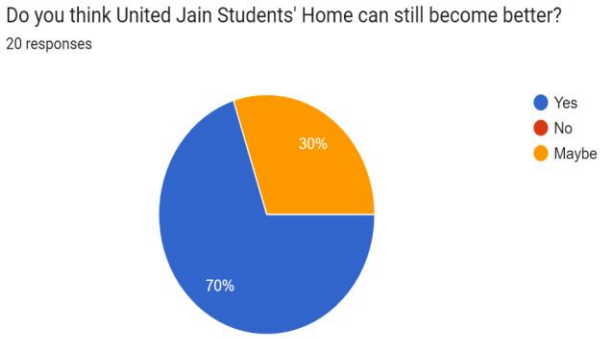


Figure 2. Resident student responses to "Do you think United Jain Students' Home can still become better?" (n = 20). Source: author's survey.

Asked whether the hostel can still become better, seventy per cent of respondents indicated that it could be improved further, against thirty per cent who were unsure and none who considered the hostel already satisfactory (Figure 2). Read alongside the scale of the 2016–2022 renovation — structural reinforcement, full sanitation upgrades, and refurbishment of all forty rooms — one possible reading is that residents' expectations of hostel quality have risen alongside, or ahead of, the improvements delivered, rather than that the renovation was seen as inadequate in itself; however, because the question concerned the hostel in general rather than the renovation specifically, the survey cannot test this interpretation. This is broadly consistent with the hostel's own long-standing self-conception as an institution still capable of further development, which the hostel's magazine attributes to its founders at each stage of its expansion, from the original 1917 founding through the 1954 and 1971 building projects to the centenary renovation.

What the survey does and does not show. The survey is a modest supplement to the documentary evidence and is used in this article for two limited purposes only: to describe the geographic and educational profile of a small group of current residents, and to record their general view that the hostel can still be improved. It does not bear on the account of the hostel's founding, funding, and expansion, which rests on the magazine and the project report; it did not ask about sect, and so cannot confirm that the hostel remains cross-sectarian; and, being a small sample, its percentages describe the twenty respondents rather than the resident body as a whole. The conclusions that follow are drawn accordingly.

Taken together, the survey and the documentary sources together point to two broader observations about UJSH's institutional trajectory. First, according to its own records, the hostel has sustained its founding commitment to cross-sectarian and increasingly cross-regional access for Jain students, funded almost entirely through community philanthropy rather than state or institutional support, from Manilal Mokamchand Shah's door-to-door fundraising in the late 1940s through the alumni-supported renovation of 2016–2022. This observation rests chiefly on the hostel's own records; the survey adds only limited support, on regional origin. Second, the near-total absence of independent documentation of UJSH outside its own magazine and internal records means that institutions of this kind — small, community-funded, and locally significant but not widely studied — risk falling outside the historical record even as they continue to shape the lived experience of the communities they serve.

Conclusion

According to its own records, the United Jain Students' Home has, for more than a century, provided affordable residential support to Jain students studying away from home in Bombay/Mumbai, combining low-cost housing, vegetarian food service consistent with Jain dietary principles, and financial assistance with a founding commitment to cross-sectarian and, increasingly, cross-regional inclusion. From its 1917 founding at Pirbhai Mansion through its consolidation on the Sion campus between 1952 and 1971, and its centenary renovation completed in 2022, the institution's growth has, on the institution's own account, been driven almost entirely by community fundraising rather than by state or institutional patronage.

Read against the wider history of Jain migration into western India, the colonial formation of Bombay, and the uneven growth of Western education in the city, UJSH illustrates how a religious minority community translated its economic and social capital into durable educational infrastructure at a moment when formal higher education in Bombay remained limited and often exclusionary. The survey, though small, indicates that the institution continues to attract students from across India and that most respondents feel the hostel can still be improved; these findings are indicative only and cannot by themselves show how the institution has responded to changing student expectations over a century of operation. As a largely undocumented case of community-funded educational philanthropy, UJSH merits further scholarly attention, both as a case study in minority institution-building in colonial and postcolonial Bombay/Mumbai and as a still-active example of Jain community welfare practice.

Limitations of the Study

This study faced several constraints. No independently published literary source on UJSH could be located online or elsewhere, leaving the hostel's own magazine — available only in Gujarati and only partially drawn upon in translation here — as the principal primary source on its early history. No book, journal article, or newspaper account specifically addressing the hostel could be found to corroborate or extend this material. Claims about the hostel's founding, funding, inauguration, and alumni therefore rest on the institution's own account and have not been independently verified. Oral interviews with hostel officials could not be arranged, further increasing reliance on literary and internal sources. The digital survey, while informative, drew on a comparatively small sample of twenty residents out of a much larger student body, limiting how far its findings on student origin, programme of study, and renovation perception can be generalised across all residents. Although respondents were selected at random, twenty out of more than 100 residents is a small sample, and the researcher's own residence at the hostel may have influenced how respondents answered; the survey also did not ask about respondents' sect,

so it cannot speak to the hostel's cross-sectarian composition. Future research incorporating a fuller translation of the hostel magazine, interviews with trustees and long-serving staff, archival corroboration from independent sources such as contemporary newspapers and public-trust or court records, and a larger resident survey would help address these gaps.

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Footnotes:

1. Several early colleges, including Hindu College (later Presidency College, 1818), predate the mid-nineteenth-century founding of the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Although these universities sought curricular parity with British institutions, fields such as zoology remained marginal until the early twentieth century (Narain, 1969).