

My Lords, Hon Members of Members of Parliament, Mr. Scott Neeson Heads of Jain organizations in the UK, IOJ patrons and Friends;

It gives me great pleasure to see you here at the 10<sup>th</sup> Ahimsa Day celebrations at the House of Commons. This is my first Ahimsa Day as IOJ Chairman and I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all of us, to thank Shri Ratibhai Chandaria for his 25 years of service to the Institute, his vision and his energy. We look forward to his continued support now as Chairman Emeritus

In those 25 years or so, the Institute has made tremendous leaps and has continually been at the forefront of bringing awareness of Jain Philosophy to a wider audience, other faiths and governments. This Ahimsa Day is for us an annual celebration of our collective vision for a more compassionate world, with less poverty, a healthier environment and respect for all forms of life.

For its part, the Institute continues to expand on its core areas of art, culture and education. We visited the Vatican at the end of 2011 and had an audience with HH the Pope. We were delighted to have issued a joint communiqué on Ahimsa and compassion, as a core tenant in both our religions. Our work with other faiths continues as we build bridges on common beliefs and look to work together on common challenges.

The JAINPedia project is entering its fifth year in 2013 and in the past 12 months we have celebrated Jain manuscript exhibitions at the Bodleian library in Oxford, in addition to the ongoing exhibit at the V&A. Last year's Ahimsa Award winner, Prof Nalini Balbir delivered a great lecture on the Jain collections at the Bodleian in the historic CONVOCATION HALL once home to the British Parliament. We also continue to work with the V&A on study days and other activities.

This year sees the start of a JAINPedia travelling exhibition that has been held at a number of venues around the UK – thus taking our message into the heart of the community.

October 2012 marks a historic milestone for JAINPedia with 1 million pages viewed on our site. We now have a world class, authoritative, non-sectarian

site that will provide unparalleled access to Jainism for hundreds of thousands of uses for years to come. The site is now live and I would encourage you to visit it and share it with your friends and family. We will continue to develop this resource and over the coming year as well as enhance the Learn Jainism site and launch a on line community Jain Spirit newsletter. We continue to see the Internet as an effective means to achieve our aims and we will be launching new projects next year.

We have continued to deliver lectures and courses in the UK, Africa, India and in Far East. We see an ongoing need to build capacity in both scholars that can work with manuscripts, and effective teachers that can deliver the Jain message.

Those of you that know us well, will be aware that we are a small team. I am grateful to my fellow directors, the JAINPedia team and our numerous volunteers for their hard work and passion. We have progressed over this coming year, but we still have a long way to go!

Finally, I would like to congratulate Scott Neeson for winning the 2012 Ahimsa Award. Many talk of compassion and the need to alleviate poverty, few are fearless enough to devote their lives to it, and even fewer succeed in the face of constant social, economic and political challenges. We pray that his example ignites a spark that drives others to do the same. I also want to congratulate him for winning the prestigious WISE Award in Doha. Thank you Scott.

I thank you all for coming and look forward to seeing you at our Diwali celebrations in the V&A Nehru Gallery on Sunday 25 November. Safe travels and god bless.

Jai Jinendra !