

## **Address by Jaysukh Mehta**

**Ahimsa Day Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Grand Committee Room House of Commons**

Respected Samniji, My Lords, Members of Parliament and the other invited guests. Jai Jinendra

Today we are celebrating the 13<sup>th</sup> Ahimsa Day in these majestic premises. We sincerely hope, that Bhagwan Mahavir's message of ahimsa, that we have talked about during that period keeps reverberating within these walls, particularly when our esteemed law makers are deliberating on the policies that define the future direction of our country.

The Institute commemorated the first Ahimsa award in year 2006, to no less a personality than the late Nelson Mandela, – he was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi – who was also our inspiration for celebrating the Ahimsa Day. Since then, awards have been made to several personalities of similar stature, who have contributed greatly to the betterment of this world through promoting either peace, compassion or education.

It is never an easy task, to identify and distinguish just one personality amongst many, who dedicate themselves to making a difference in this world through their selfless service in the fields of compassion, peace or education. However, one name has stood out for the Institute. +That name and the recipient of this year's Institute of Jainology's Ahimsa Award is Ms Ingrid Newkirk – one of the founding directors of PETA.

Ingrid is well known to many of our members, however, I will give a brief outline of her biography to highlight some of the reasons why the Directors selected her to receive the award.

Ingrid Newkirk is an animal rights activist, an author, and the president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (or PETA as we know it).

She is best known for the animal rights awareness campaigns she organizes on behalf of [PETA](#), which she had cofounded in 1980.

Ingrid was born in England, and then moved to New Delhi with her parents at the age of 7. Whilst in India, her mother volunteered for Mother Teresa and various other charities. Ingrid's early volunteering experiences of packing pills and rolling bandages for people who were suffering from

leprosy, stuffing toys for orphans, and feeding stray animals—helped her form the view, that anyone in need, including animals, is worthy of concern.

It was not until she was 21, that Ingrid had thought about animal rights or vegetarianism. It was in 1970, when she and her husband were living in the State of Maryland and she was studying to become a stockbroker, a neighbour abandoned some kittens. Ingrid decided to take them to an animal shelter. This was a life changing-experience for Ingrid and led to her first job working on behalf of animals—cleaning kennels and investigating cruelty cases.

Ingrid's various experiences in that job and later on—made her realize that there was a need for an organization like PETA.

Since it was founded, PETA has exposed horrific animal abuse in laboratories, leading to many firsts, including cancelled funding, closed facilities, seizure of animals, and charges filed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- PETA has also closed the largest horse-slaughter operation in North America,
- convinced dozens of major designers and hundreds of companies to stop using fur,
- ended all car-crash tests on animals,
- helped schools switch to [alternatives to dissection](#),
- and provided millions of people with information on [vegetarianism](#),
- and countless other issues concerning the animal welfare.

As [PETA's president](#), Ingrid has spoken internationally on animal rights issues—from the steps of the Canadian Parliament to the streets of New Delhi and from the drowning tanks of Taiwan to the halls of U.S. Congress.

Ingrid has authored several books and articles on animal rights, ways of preventing cruelty and loving the animals.

Ingrid Newkirk's biography shows that she is an advocate who remains committed to the idea that animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment but are to be cared for and protected. This conviction resonates so well with the Jain tenet of all life being interdependent.

Unfortunately Ingrid cannot be with us today in person to receive the award but has deputed Ms Mimi Bekheche – the European Director of PETA to receive the award on her behalf. I request Mimi to come forward and our Chief Guest Rt Hon Keith Vaz will present the award to her. I also request the Institute's Chairman, Nemu Chandaria to come forward.

Thank you