

Ahimsa Day 15th October 2015

**Grand Committee Room Address by Mr Nemu Chandaria
Chairman Institute of Jainology**

My Lords, Hon Members, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Jai Jinendra!

As we come together for another Ahimsa Day, I am pleased to report that we continue to make much progress.

Last year we presented the 2013 Ahimsa Award to Melanie Joy for her promotion of Carnism - a system of beliefs that allows an estimated 10 billion land animals to be slaughtered for their meat every year in the U.S., yet most of the animals are never seen by the public. Melanie believes that the choice to eat meat is not natural but a result of social conditioning; and the majority of people care deeply about animals and do not want them to suffer.

Such compassion for life is the first and foremost tenant of Jainism, and I am delighted that the Institute continues to recognise Ahimsa in all its forms.

Today we will present this year's Ahimsa Award and I look forward to congratulating the winner. You can find details of the origins of Ahimsa Day, and past winners of the Ahimsa Award on Wikipedia and Jainpedia.

Last year we also supported Mr Sudhir Lodha, who has come from Chennai especially for this event. We warmly welcome him here today, and congratulate him for securing minority status for the Jains in India. This status will ensure Jains have access to resources and opportunities, and that Jain temples and heritage will be further protected under law.

For our part, the Institute coordinated the support of the UK Jain community and sent a petition to the Central Government with signatures of all UK institutions. Indeed the Indian Government recognised our contribution.

Following our efforts, many UK Jain organisations have encouraged us to formalise the role we have played for many years. On September 28th, we brought together the 30 or so UK Jain Organisations and other Jain leaders, and received a unanimous mandate to represent the Jain faith in Government and inter-faith matters.

I look forward to bringing the united and coordinated voice of the Jain people to this House and elsewhere so that we can rightfully play our full part in 21st Century Britain.

Finally can I again welcome you all to this magnificent building, the mother of all Parliaments, and trust that you will have an enjoyable, as well as inspiring, Ahimsa Day.