

My Lords, Hon members, ladies and gentlemen

Firstly my thanks to Lord Dholakia, Mr. Ashok Sharma MP and Mr. Barry Gardiner MP For hosting this event on behalf of the all party Friends of India and to Gareth Thomas MP for booking this committee room for us.

My very warm welcome to you this 14th Ahimsa Day at the House of Commons. I am delighted to see so many familiar faces.

Today will see the 7th recipient of our Annual Ahimsa Award and I am sure you are all waiting eagerly to hear the announcement.

Many of you may know that the Institute is celebrating its Silver Anniversary this year. As a part of the celebration a Coffee Table Book was published with highlights from our first 25 years.

Ahimsa Day and the IOJ Ahimsa Award have become regular features in our calendar and we were truly honoured that HRH Prince Charles accepted a special 25th Anniversary Ahimsa Award for his work on the environment during his visit to the Jain Temple at Oshwal Centre, Potters Bar earlier in the year.

We also have another guest who has flown in from India to be with us. He is Mr Kamal Dugar who is the Global President of the Jain Swetamber Terapanthi Mahasabha, India. We will have an opportunity to listen to him later on.

Last year I announced that the IOJ had led the formation of One Jain - a single voice to represent all 30 Jain community organisations in Government and Inter-faith matters.

I can report that we continue to make progress and that the Jain voice and the awareness of 'Ahimsa' - the tenet of non-violence - is the highest that I have ever witnessed. To this end, in raising the awareness of Ahimsa, the Institute had recently facilitated a talk by His Holiness the Dalai Lama titled 'Ahimsa – India's Gift to the World' at London Coliseum - it was attended by over 2,500 people.

But now back to this evening. Can I ask you to sit back and enjoy tonight's programme and the announcement of recipient of the 2015 IOJ Ahimsa Award.

