

Rt Hon Gareth Thomas, Cllr Rekhaben Shah- mayor of Harrow, Navinbhai Shah, Bill Liao, Satishkumarji, Nemubhai and all the office bearers of IOJ, all dignitaries and invited guests,

On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1961, President Kennedy in his inaugural speech said: "**ask not what** your country can **do** for you; ask what **you can do** for your country".

This beautiful advice and message is a timeless phenomenon and teaches us many things. When we think about this, we contemplate and say: I should not think what my community can do or what my relatives can do for me but I should think what I can do for my community or for my relations? We think about our rights and not about our duties. When we embark upon certain activities, we think about what is in it for me?... and not what I can do here or how and in what way I shall contribute here.

Ever since my childhood, I wanted to work for the sake of working; without any rewards and praises. To me doing something is in itself a rewarding experience.

I have learned a lot from my family, friends and above all from the numerous books that I have read. I had lost my mother when I was just two years old, I read some 1500 books by the time I was 13/14 years old. That was my nourishment, my curiosity and my search for something higher than my immediate world.

My father was a very wise man and a strong moral guide. He was a strict disciplinarian and a very honest man. I remember a small incident when I was about 10 years old, I saw some posts that were delivered by a local postman. One of the letters or envelopes had a stamp on it but there was no cancellation mark. I saw that and thought: Oh yes, I can carefully peel the stamp off and we can reuse it. I made the stamp slightly wet and slowly started peeling off the postage stamp. My father saw this, quietly took the envelope from my hand and with his pen, put a big cross on the stamp. "This is cheating", he said..." cheating our post office and cheating our government". This incident made lasting impression on me and I always think that what he left behind, after his death, was worth more than millions to me.

I come from a humble background and my religion and my environment have taught me to lead a simple life. I have always lead a non-materialist life and I have tried to propagate good values of Non-violence, Non-acquisition and understanding and accepting multiplicity of viewpoints.

Although I have taught Jainism as a philosophy, I have tried to teach the principles by applying it to practical situations to help others lead a happy and peaceful life. I am proud to say that these learnings have made a difference to many people's lives. We have provided a temple for the people living in North-West London. This has become a blessing for many young and old people who regularly visit the temple. I feel overwhelmed when very old people bless me and the young ones thank me for having a place of worship.

I am very humbled to receive this Honour and hope this will be an inspiration for others to take up voluntary works too. I thank Institute of Jainology- for this OneJAIN Life time Achievement Award. I wholeheartedly support the work being done by Nemubhai Chandaria and his hardworking team. They have made a mark in promoting Jainism on the world stage. I thank my colleague in Mahavir Foundation too who have always supported me. I thank my wife Sudha and my family for their love and support. I have always felt the presence and help from all mighty who I think is there for me and for you. Finally, this is from Kahlil Gibran's poem

For in revery you cannot rise above your achievements nor fall lower than your failures.  
And if you would know God be not therefore a solver of riddles.  
Rather look about you and you shall see Him playing with your children.  
And look into space; you shall see Him walking in the cloud, outstretching His arms in  
the lightning and descending in rain.  
You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands in trees.