

Citation for OneJAIN Lifetime Achievement Award

The Awardee is a well-known member of the Jain community, having been active in many spheres of service in the community.

He qualified as a mechanical engineer in 1958 in India., He decided to migrate to the UK in 1968 and settled in Leicester where, at that time, there was scant Asian community and only a handful of Jains.

His job in the aircraft industry was demanding, but his zest to serve the community ensured he made time for it. He gathered the small number of Jains in Leicester and started celebrating the annual Jain festival of Paryushan and other smaller events.

This activity soon attracted Jains from all over the Midlands. Finally, in 1973, four years after he had started the informal gatherings, with the support of all Jain sects, he formally established *Jain Samaj Leicester* and was the founding Chairman and remained so for the next four years.

To pursue a Masters degree, the Awardee relinquished his post as Chairman but remained a Trustee of Jain Samaj: a post he held for 30 years. During this time, the organisation changed its name to *Jain Samaj Europe*. That organisation was successful in inaugurating the first Jain temple in Europe with all Jain sects represented: setting a precedent that has been followed elsewhere in the world, a credit to the Trustees of the day.

In 1980, work moved him to Hertfordshire giving him the opportunity to get involved with the Jain communities in Luton and London. This was perhaps destined for his retirement which settled him in London in 1995 where a much greater involvement in social activities awaited him. His first major appointment was as Chairman of the *National Council of Vanik Associations (NCVA in short)*: an umbrella body for Jain and Vaishnav organisations in the UK.

He is still the Chairman of NCVA, now known as the *Vanik Council*, and has been instrumental in introducing many innovative ideas in the community.

The busy professional life of the younger people made it difficult to them to participate in social events. In 1982, NCVA introduced 'speed dating' events for arranging introductions for these young people. These events made it easier to find a suitable match and a large number of successful matches and subsequently marriages have been recorded. This event is as popular if not more even today.

Since 1982, NCVA has periodically compiled and published a community directory. The Awardee converted this into an online directory with details available to registered members. This is very helpful in locating friends and families in the UK.

Our Awardee setup a Jain spiritual care system and a Chaplaincy service following which Jainism was recognised by the NHS as a faith option for patients in hospitals.

He represents Jains in the NHS Healthcare Chaplaincy Multi-Faith Group and served as the Groups' Chairman from 2009-2011.

Jain Spiritual Care has been extended to Her Majesty's Prisons, following a request from the Prison Service in 2010 – though I hasten to add that it is a very rare occurrence that one would see a Jain as Her Majesty's guest!

In the community, he leads a team of volunteers who conduct final rites at funeral services. His initiatives in promoting healthcare is well-known through seminars, especially raising awareness of living organ donations.

To mention some of his other activities, the Awardee served as a Trustee for the *Navnat Vanik Association* – the second largest Jain organisation in the UK. He represents Jain faith in Brent SACRE and Brent Multi Faith Forum. He holds regular talks on Jain rituals and basic Jain philosophy.

In his almost 50 years in the UK - he has covered a vast ground to provide a variety of beneficial services to the community. Whilst he is not currently associated with all that he initiated – the communities continue to benefit from them and will remain as his lasting legacy to the Jain community in the UK.

THE RECEIPT OF 2018 OneJAIN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: Mr MANHARLAL MEHTA