

Pujya Shamniji's, My Lords, Honourable Members of Parliament, Members of Interfaith, OneJAIN and other community members, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

This year, is our 15<sup>th</sup> Annual IoJ Ahimsa Award. This Award is presented annually to a carefully chosen and vetted, deserving personality, from across the globe, who is actively involved in self-less, compassionate, humanitarian work, in education, social upliftment, disaster relief and the environment.

It gives me enormous pleasure in sharing with you details of some of the wonderful work being done by this years' awardee, Shri Shantilal Gulabchand Muttha.

Mr Muttha is a self-made man, who gave up his flourishing business of real estate at the young age of 31 to pursue his heart's calling. In 1985, he went on to establish the Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana (BJS) and in 2015, he set up the Shantilal Muttha Foundation (SMF) of which he is the Founder and Chairman.

Both organisations are non-political, non-sectarian, non-profit and over the last 3 decades, he has channelled his efforts primarily into social development, disaster response and school education focussing on quality and value. Under his leadership, both these organisations have achieved the fine balance of not only working extensively at the grassroots but also contributing to the national policy-level thought process and decision making.

His work has always involved a three step process of first identifying an issue of national concern, demonstrating proof of his concept by successful implementation and evaluation and thereafter offering it free of cost to the government as a replicable, scalable, tried and tested model. I would not be surprised at all if this fantastic multiplier-effect model is adopted by many more developing countries.

Mr Muttha's work in the social sphere which started in 1986 has led to fundamental changes in the collective psyche of several communities in India where dowry deaths and female foeticide were widely prevalent.

In the area of disaster response and relief, BJS was conferred an Award for Excellence in Humanitarian Action by the National Disaster Management Authority of India with

recognition in the Indian Parliament, which is a testimony to the seminal work done in several rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations in India during natural calamities.

Recently Mr Muttha has a new mission to make the drought prone states in India, drought free over the next few years in order to overcome the agrarian crisis faced by millions of farmers in the country, often forcing many to commit suicide. His successful, high-impact model of district transformation through water conservation and watershed development which thrives on community participation at the village level has been studied in depth by policy makers in India. The government of India is taking decisive steps to replicate the model across several districts in many drought affected states.

**Mr Muttha believes that Education transforms lives but Value education transforms Society.**

He has been particularly concerned with improving educational quality with a focus on value for the 1.5 million schools in the country. While several education policy documents, framed in India, have emphasised the need for value education in schools, there has been no model for large scale implementation of value education across states education departments and school bodies.

His vision to bridge the critical gap, with a contemporary approach, aligned to national and international policies, unfolded in the form of “mulya-varadhan” – mulya means value and vardhan means increment – a school based programme aimed at enabling schools to provide child-friendly and value based education to nurture caring, responsible, productive and democratic citizens. The programme in its current form is a result of years of field trials and successive evaluation studies by reputed institutions including our Cambridge University of UK. The Shantilal Muttha Foundation, exclusively works for large scale implementation of the educational programmes envisioned by Mr Muttha. He strongly believes that technology can be a great enabler for increasing educational productivity and quality. To this end he is developing some extremely user friendly, e-learning teacher training platforms, which can be easily used even by first-timers.

State governments of Maharashtra and Goa have adopted the mulya-varadhan project and presently it has already reached over 40,000 government primary schools, benefitting around 2.2million children. With support from the Government of India, this replicable

programme is poised for nationwide rollout and is now also available in multiple regional languages.

Mr Muttha has been conferred upon with several Lifetime Achievement Awards from renowned organisations over the last few years in recognition of his work. Notably among them was the Diwaliben Mohanlal Mehta Award in 1998 presented by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, who is also a past recipient of our Ahimsa Award. Mr Muttha has also been honoured with the Rajiv Gandhi Manav Seva Award in 2017 presented by the Hon'ble President of India.

What an amazing person and what wonderful work. Ladies and Gentlemen, let us all congratulate Mr Shantilal Gulabchand Muttha and wish him continued success in his endeavours, in all that he has undertaken to do for bringing about a change in people's lives.

May I now please invite the rest of the IoJ Board and Lord Bates for the presentation.

Thank you.