

Remarks for the Institute of Jainology parliamentary reception

Theme of speech: Conscious Compassion

Thanks

- Thanks to the Institute of Jainology to celebrate Ahimsa Day with you.
- Particular thank you to my old friend Navnit Dholakia for hosting us, and to Barry Gardiner (Chair, Labour Friends of India) and Shailesh Vara (Chair, Conservative Friends of India).
- Timely occasion - last Friday was World Animal Day.

Ahimsa

- Ahimsa is a Sanskrit term for nonviolence (literally, "do not injure"). A concept in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, ahimsa is based on the premise that all living beings share the same divine spiritual energy. Since all beings share this connection, to harm another being physically, emotionally, or verbally is to harm oneself.
- The Eastern traditions - Jains, Hinduism, Buddhism - share a fine tradition of demonstrating compassion and laying down the principles of respect to fellow animals.
- I had the privilege recently visiting temples of all three faiths in London and Birmingham and have been moved by the dedication to animal welfare in all three communities.
- A particular moving experience to go to the **Jain Paryushan Festival** at the Oshwal Centre in North London last year. Such was the importance to me as CEO of the RSPCA that I took with me two of our most senior trustees.
- Vision of working in partnership with faiths.

RSPCA heritage and faiths

- RSPCA itself is anchored in faiths and religious diversity. Established by the Anglican visionary Rev Arthur Broome, the Society's first Secretary was the Jewish Lewis Gompertz.
- Broome worked tirelessly with the Irish MP Richard Martin in galvanizing support for animals and establishing the Society in 1824. Working from his parish in the East End – Bromley-by-Bow – Rev Broome oversaw the first years of the Society's operations.

- Along with Broome, there were two other clergymen who were the 22 founders of the SPCA - Reverend George Bonner (St. James, Cheltenham) and Reverend George Avery Hatch (Cheapside here in London).
- As a philosopher, Gompertz caused a sensation in 1824 with his book 'Moral Inquiries: on the situation of man and of brutes' which was quite unlike anything that had been written before.
- His abiding principle in his writings and work - as in **Jainism** - was a fundamental objection to killing or harming any animal, or any living being, for any purpose whatsoever including food, clothing, labour, research or entertainment.
- The RSPCA was bestowed its royal patronage by the young Princess Victoria who went on to become the 'Defender of the Faith'. The relationship between the RSPCA and faiths is inextricably tied.

Compassion for animals and faiths

- Compassion for animals is anchored in faiths universally, not any one particular faith. The RSPCA's foundation reflects that diversity.
- Time in memoriam the great religions and the various spiritual traditions, including Humanism, have fostered the humane care for all our fellow creatures.
- Each religion has tried in its own way to lay down the basic principles and to nurture in man a sense of responsibility as the custodian of nature. That is why I am building out relationships with faith communities.
- Learning from the above is not the sharp differences of scriptures, rather the shared values of compassion.
- Building a new RSPCA for the 21st century - we need to go back to the beginning and work with our original partners but in a new way.

Compassionate Consumerism

- One way I see of making a difference in Society is embracing the consumerist values that characterise today.
- Reflections of working at The Body Shop the power of compassionate consumerism.

Conclusion

· RSPCA and Jain communities are friends united by common cause. Belief we share values with many other faith communities and am working with my Jain friends in establishing an Interfaith advisory body at the RSPCA.

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