

My Lords, Members of Parliament, Trustees of the Institute of Jainology, friends.

Jai Jinendra, Namaste, Vanakkan and good morning

It's a privilege, honour and pleasure to participate in the "Ahimsa" day celebrations at the House of Commons. I take this opportunity to thank Institute of Jainology for having invited me to speak among such an august gathering.

I serve as a member of the state minority commission, Government of Tamil Nadu, Southernmost Province of Indian Union, under the able leadership of our Honourable Chief Minister "J.Jayalalitha". In our state the principles of Ahimsa, Vegetarianism and Animal Protection are well regarded within the ambit of our democracy.

It's very often said that life is uncertain and unpredictable, but what is certain is that death is inevitable; all of us have to leave this world some time. So regardless of what life holds for us, it's best we dedicate our lives for the common good of the society. We must strive hard to build a vibrant and inclusive society, failing which we are certain to remain an imperfect society; such development will lead to social inequalities and the cancerous infection of our democratic institutions.

The values of Ahimsa, Vegetarianism and Animal Protection are not mere moralistic or theological conclusion but very relevant to our modern day living, these values are interconnected with world peace and can be practiced in our daily life. Please permit me to say a few words on Ahimsa, Animal protection and vegetarianism.

Ahimsa is not restricted to violence leading to death of men and animal, Ahimsa is not restricted to standing up against the killing of some human being or butchering of another animal. Ahimsa is standing up against any forms of violence, of thought, speech and actions, be it against human beings, animal world, environment, the earth, planets, trees, and rivers and so on....

All lives at all levels are the manifest of God. Recognising the sacredness in them and not choosing to hurt them even for sport is Ahimsa.

Non injury, upholding the truth, absence of anger, renunciation, absence of calumny, compassion to being, all these constitute Ahimsa. Scientific discoveries have led to a firm conclusion that many species are extinct due to exploitation for them for food and pleasure. Trillions have died due to malafide actions and wrongful thought process of many rulers or States to prove their superiority as early as Second World War or the latest in Middle East or Africa. Eternal Peace has always been achieved at negotiating table not through weapons of destructions.

There is a belief in our modern society that those who consume meat are stronger, it is to be remembered that the strongest of animals with great endurance are vegetarians; the Rhinos, the elephants; the horse and the ox are known for their might and capacity to work. It's very easy to find reasons when one considers the longevity of plant life due to their firm exposure to all vagaries of nature.

I quote Isaac Bashevis Singer, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature, he asked, How can we pray to God for mercy if we ourselves have no mercy? How can we speak of rights and justice if we take an innocent creature and shed its blood? He went on to say, I personally believe that as long as human

beings will go shedding the blood of animals, there will never be any peace. Our Tirthankars from Rishbha to Mahaveer enunciated and perfected the principle of Ahimsa for harmonious life. Jains have been taught that unless every soul gets rid of Rag and dwesh (Attachment and Anger), we can never have mercy or salvation.

Scientifically, as Newton's third law of motion states, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. On the universal scale this is called the law of karma, meaning what goes around comes around. This affects every individual, as well as communities and countries. As the nation sows, so shall it reap. This is something we should take very seriously, especially in our attempt to bring peace, harmony, and unity into the world. If so much violence is produced by the killing of humans and animals, where do you think the reactions to this violence goes? It comes back to us in so many ways, such as the form of neighbourhood and community crime, and on up to world wars. Violence breeds violence.

Ladies and gentle man, we cannot wait until the last war is fought, last tree is cut, the last fish is caught or the last river is dry to let our next generation realise that money cannot be eaten.

In our pursuit for world peace, let us pursue Ahimsa and through Ahimsa, the practice of vegetarianism and animal protection. I recognise universal acceptance of Ahimsa may take time but let's make an honest start in the interest of the next generation.

I conclude with a popular belief in India and as quoted by His Excellency Dr Abdul Kalam, former President of India. Where there is rightness in the heart, there is beauty in the character, when there is beauty in the character there is harmony in the home, when there is harmony in the home, there is order in the nation, when there is order in the nation there is peace in the world.

Ladies and gentle men thank you for your patient hearing.