



PRESS RELEASE

The Institute of Jainology and Jain All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Celebrates 20th Annual Ahimsa Day at the House of Commons

Westminster, UK, 24th October 2023: The Institute of Jainology (IOJ) and the Jain All-Party Parliamentary Group today celebrated its 20th annual Ahimsa Day at the House of Commons. Ahimsa, loosely translated as 'non-violence', is the major tenet of the Jain faith. The event celebrates those whose lives personify compassion.

Ahimsa Day is held annually at the House of Commons, Palace of Westminster, and brings together esteemed personalities and dignitaries including from parliament, Jain and other faith communities, and academia.

The evening commenced with the serene recitation of the sacred Jain prayer, Navkar Mantra, and blessings by the revered nuns, Pujya Samani ji, setting a spiritually uplifting tone for the gathering. Dr. Mehool H Sanghrajka, the Managing Trustee of the IOJ, warmly welcomed the attendees, emphasizing the importance of promoting compassion and non-violence in the contemporary world.

The Hon Gareth Thomas MP, Chair of the Jain APPG, extended a gracious welcome, highlighting the continued relevance of Ahimsa in fostering peace and harmony.

Padma Shri The Hon Bob Blackman MP Vice -Chair of the Jain APPG also gave a warm welcome and provided insightful remarks emphasizing the importance of fostering understanding and appreciation for the Jain community's cultural and educational needs.

The Shadow Minister of Faith, the Hon Sarah Owen MP addressed the event and underscored the significance of upholding principles of non-violence and compassion in society.

Lord Bilimoria of Chelsea, Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, delivered a compelling introduction, setting the stage for the announcement of the endowment of the Bhagwan Dharmanath Chair at the University of Birmingham. To mark the occasion, a Jain Murti (idol) of Bhagwan Dharmanath was presented to the Chancellor and other professors of the university by the Directors of the IOJ.

Professor Charlotte Hempel, Head of the School of Philosophy Theology and Religion, Professor David Cheetham, Director of the Birmingham Centre for Philosophy of Religion, Professor Andrew Davies, Director of the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion, and Dr Marie H el ene Gorisse, Assistant Professor in Jain Studies collectively articulated the University of Birmingham's profound commitment to fostering Jain Studies.



The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Ahimsa Award. Previous winners have included HM The King and the Dalai Lama. The award is presented annually by the IOJ to individuals who embody the spirit of compassion. The winner of the 2023 Ahimsa Award was Mr. Jasvant Nagindas Modi of Los Angeles, California, for his exemplary contributions to the field of Jain education by endowing over 30 chairs at major colleges and universities, including the University of Birmingham.

The award was presented by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Jain APPG alongside the Directors of the IOJ, and was graciously acknowledged by Mr Modi in his heartfelt response. Nemubhai Chandaria OBE, IOJ Chair said “Jasvant bhai is a deserving winner of this year’s Ahimsa Award for establishing many chairs in Jain studies in Western universities. His vision of Jain education becoming a part of the mainstream has already started to become a reality.”

Mr Parveen Jain of the Arihanta Institute, a major online platform for the study of applied Jainism, presented the vision and objectives of the institute. He was also accompanied by Dr Christopher Millar, its Academic Director.

The event concluded with a historic announcement by Dr Adrian Plau of the Wellcome Collection, responsible for the collection’s 2,000 Jain manuscripts. He discussed the acquisition of the manuscripts, and a landmark decision by Wellcome on the restitution of the entire collection to the Jain community. Dr Mehool Sanghrajka, on behalf of the IOJ, accepted the collection and called the move both brave and pioneering. He announced that the IOJ would arrange for the collection to be loaned to the Jain centre at the University of Birmingham, to contribute to its status as a major global site for Jain teaching and research.

Mr. Amit Lathia, a director of the IOJ, presented a vote of thanks and in his closing remarks, expressed the IOJ’s gratitude to all participants and attendees, including those who had travelled far for the event.

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About OneJAIN

OneJAIN is an initiative of the Institute of Jainology (IOJ), which was established in 2014 with the unanimous consent of all Jain organisations in the UK. IOJ represents the Jain community in government and interfaith matters and provides the Jain community with a single coherent voice in promoting the values and cause of Jainism

For more information see www.onejainuk.org

About the Institute of Jainology

The Institute of Jainology (IOJ) was founded in 1986 and is an international organisation promoting Jain philosophy and values through the disciplines of art, culture and education. It



represents the 32 UK Jain organisations and the Jain faith under the OneJAIN banner in government and inter-faith matters in the UK and elsewhere.

Over its 25 year history, the IOJ has co-hosted the Peaceful Liberators exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum London, published the Catalogue of the Jain Collection at the British Library, and launched the Jainpedia.org encyclopaedia.

For more information see www.jainology.org and www.jainpedia.org