

## **Ahimsa Day 2024 – Citation for Surendra Patawari**

Jai Jinendra & Good Evening All

Vandami Naman Sami Pujya Samnijis

My Lords,

Lord Khan of Burnley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Lords Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement),

Honourable Members of the House

Gareth Thomas MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Services, Small Businesses and Exports)

Padmashree Bob Blackman MP Member Harrow East

Invited Guests & Members of the Jain Community

Ahimsa Award is presented to those, Jains and Non-Jains alike, who embody and promote the principles of Ahimsa in any facet of life.

It is my honour to present to you the 2024 Ahimsa Award winner. This year's recipient exemplifies the values of Ahimsa—non-violence and compassion not just in thought but in transformative global action, proving that the ancient tenets of Jainism hold crucial relevance for our contemporary world too.

I am delighted to introduce Mr. Surendra Patawari, a leader whose work spans continents, industries, and humanitarian causes. Mr. Patawari is the founder and chairman of Gemini Corporation, a global leader in the circular economy based in Belgium. His visionary journey began in 1989, well before the current urgency around sustainability and climate change. What started as a personal commitment to reducing waste has now grown into a global enterprise collecting over 2 million tonnes of recyclable materials across 75 countries.

Gemini's work in giving new life to discarded materials like plastics, rubber, and metal is staggering. The corporation breathes new purpose into over 4 billion pounds of materials, including 1 billion PET bottles and 50 million tires, annually. This remarkable effort aligns perfectly with Jain values—transforming what might seem worthless into something that benefits the planet and its inhabitants.

Mr. Patawari's contributions extend beyond business. He plays a vital role in shaping international environmental policies. As a member of the World Economic Forum's advisory board and Chair of the Plastics Taskforce under His Majesty King Charles III's Sustainable Markets Initiative, he is at the forefront of discussions about global sustainability and the UN Global Plastics Treaty.

These efforts are ever more urgent in light of the startling reality. According to WWF's 2024 Living Planet Report just in past 50 years there has been a catastrophic 73% decline in the average size of monitored wildlife populations. This crisis underscores the gravity of the dual challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. As the Earth approaches dangerous tipping points, tackling these

crises will require enormous collective action. Mr. Patawari's life work is a profound contribution to this global call for environmental responsibility.

Yet Mr. Patawari's vision doesn't stop with the physical world. He recognises that education is the key to ensuring that future generations carry forward the values of Ahimsa, compassion, and environmental stewardship. His support for establishing a Jain Chair at the University of Ghent is a testament to his belief that the philosophies of Jainism, particularly non-violence and sustainability, must be taught at the highest academic levels to remain accessible and continue flourishing.

His compassion is also deeply personal. Beyond his corporate and environmental efforts, Mr. Patawari has adopted 12 villages in India, supporting their medical needs, built two schools educating 400 children, and helped plant and maintain 100,000 trees in Rajasthan. This comprehensive approach to both human and environmental welfare reflects the depth of his commitment to Ahimsa.

As we honour Mr. Patawari tonight, let us remember his words: "Waste is not waste until it is wasted." The materials we discard today are resources for tomorrow. Let his example inspire us to view both our environment and our communities through the lens of care, renewal, and compassion.

The winner of the 2024 Ahimsa Award is Mr. Surendra Patawari, unfortunately he cannot be with us this evening. His son Kunaal will accept the award on his behalf. Can I request him to come forward to receive the award.

Can I also be the first to congratulate Mr Surendra Patawari in joining the elite group of Ahimsa Award winners

**By Jaysukh Mehta – IOJ Member of Board of Directors**