

CITATION for VINODBHAI KAPASHI – JAIN APPJ – HOUSE OF COMMONS 7 MARCH 2017

My Lords, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

Jains are spread around the world and are estimated to be around 5 million of which the vast majority reside throughout India. In the U.K. we are in total around 40,000 of which the majority have migrated here in the 60's and 70's from East Africa and the rest from India.

In the U.K., Jains have integrated well into the United Kingdom through most professions and businesses and are well known for their entrepreneurial spirit that has seen us prosper here where meritocracy and the 'rule of law' play a great part in building an open and transparent society.

We have also seen many devote their time to the development of our communities; in building temples and community centres, in preserving our language and culture, in caring for our elderly and in developing our youth so that they become responsible citizens.

Now some 50 years on, it is time to recognise some of these exemplary Jain individuals who have made a big impact within and beyond our community. In September 2015, all 30 UK Jain organisations came together to form 'One JAIN', to have One voice for the Jain community in matters of government and interfaith. As a part of this agenda, we will annually recognise, at this APPG event, one Jain person who has committed his or her life to the development of the UK Jain community, through his or her work.

I am delighted, on behalf of One JAIN, to launch today the One JAIN Lifetime Achievement Award. This award will be presented today jointly by the Chair of the APPG, Mr Gareth Thomas MP, and the Chair of the Institute of Jainology, Mr Nemu Chandaria.

I am proud to say, the UK Jain community is blessed with several such individuals but as is always the case, the committee entrusted with the selection, have picked one outstanding individual for this first award:

Tonight's recipient was born in a village called Chuda in the state of Gujarat and received his primary and secondary education in Chuda, Limbdi and Vallabhipur followed by a Civil Engineering Degree in Ahmedabad. From a young age he was an avid reader, going through 100's of books and this provided a foundation of general and religious knowledge and humanitarian values.

He moved to the UK in 1968 working for a number of construction companies before joining the Local Council. He retired before turning 60 and then spent his time on literary activities and Jainism.

In the 1980s, he was an Executive Committee member of Jain Samaj Europe in Leicester and helped in building the Jain Temple there. He was also vice president of Gujarati Literary Academy and started writing for various magazines and composing several plays.

At that time he also started devoting more time to promoting Jainism through authoring many books and articles on Jain subjects. His first book "In Search of the Ultimate" was

based on Jain scriptures followed by three simple books explaining Jain faith to English speaking readers. His book on Hemchandracharya (an 11th Century Jain Acharya of great distinction) was a result of four years study and research.

His major work 'Nava Smarana-Nine sacred Recitations of Jainism" was a Ph. D. Thesis and the book with this title is being widely referred to by scholars and people all over the world.

He also founded a Jain Charity called Mahavir Foundation and continues to serve as president of this Trust. Mahavir Foundation has provided a temple for the people residing in Kenton, and we were delighted to see Gareth Thomas there in January. This temple is very popular with young and old and serves as a hub for many religious activities.

Our award winner has travelled to many countries and has lectured on countless Jain topics. He was instrumental in starting a Jain learning course at the Birkbeck college with the IOJ and taught many students. During the course of his activities he has met with Royals and many dignitaries including the Pope at the Vatican. He has also attended 2 Parliament-of-World-Religions, co-ordinated by the IOJ and presented his research papers and lectures at many sessions there.

After the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, he was part of a fund raising team and visited the affected areas and chose a village called Ninama which was entirely rebuilt with the funds raised here.

He also works for the betterment of lonely and retired people through an organisation called Navjivan Vadil Kendra which has recently received the Queens Award for Voluntary Services.

And in all this achievement, he has received untiring support from his wife Sudha and their 3 daughters.

As many of you would have guessed already, the winner of the first One Jain Lifetime Achievement Award is Dr. Vinod Kapashi

On behalf of the UK Jain Community, please join me in congratulating the winner of the 1st One Jain Award, Dr. Vinod Kapashi.

And now to present this award, may I now invite, the Jain APPG Chairman Gareth Thomas and the IOJ Chair Mr Nemu Chandaria.

Vinodbhai, we wish you a long and healthy life and May you serve our faith and community for many more years to come.

Thank you.