



Dr. Ogarit Younan
Recipient

International Award 2022 for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India

Good day to all, coming from Lebanon, from the Arab world.

I would like to start with you, The Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, remembering the founder Mr. Jamnalal Kaniram Bajaj the beloved associate of the Mahatma.

It's your special day! To celebrate your values, your spirit of giving, in Khalil Gibran's words in his book "The Prophet": "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give."

THANK YOU,

Mr. Shekhar Bajaj, the Chairman,

Ms. Minal Bajaj, Hon. Director of the Foundation,

Dr. R. A. Mashelkar, Chairman of the Council of Advisers,

The JURY and the Chairpersons of the Selection Committee of the awards category, And the Staff who showered me with kindness, respect and a lot of understanding and worked with great professionalism to make this event a success.

I would have liked to be standing here with Walid Slaybi, the award is ours together, but his health condition prevented that. Let me wish him with you, strength, patience and a peaceful spirit in his struggle with cancer. He sends you warmest greetings and appreciation with heartfelt thanks. What if Gandhi did not exist!?

What if he did not rise up on that day in the train accident in South Africa and completed his entire life, day by day, just as a nonviolent militant!

What if he hadn't invented the word "NON-VIOLENCE"!?

What if he did not live by himself this "Non-Violence"!? in appearance, in behaviour, in thoughts, in values, as well as in means and ends for social and political struggle. what if!?

It would be a loss to humanity. for history.

How grateful we are to have had Gandhi!

How wonderful it is that History has won itself and forever by adopting his philosophy and strategy of "Non-Violence" and being inspired by his life experience! Yes, violence will always remain unfortunately, but, as Walid Slaybi said:

"We are in a world where violence has not won. We are in a world where Non-Violence has not won enough yet."

Today you are honoring the dissemination of the culture of Non-Violence, the spread of Gandhian values, through us and with us. This is how we understand our honor, Walid and I, with such depth and loftiness.

With love, we are delighted with this award. Whoever knows us knows that we and the awards rarely get along. But here, it bears the name "Gandhi", and it has a history that is sincerely and persistently connected to the heritage of a family that made Gandhi a member of it and constantly revives his memory and values, from father to sons and daughters and those around them in the Bajaj Foundation and in India.

For a nice coincidence, every year while I taught Gandhi, I talked about Bajaj's support to Gandhi, about the land and house he gave to the Mahatma, and that before knowing about the award and being in contact with you. Students used to compare Gandhi's humble house with the wooden house of the pioneering nonviolent thinker Henry David Thoreau who chose to live in the woods in a small cabin he made himself with the help of his brother! As you know, Gandhi was very influenced by Thoreau's political thought, with the concept of civil disobedience that Thoreau launched in 1848, which Gandhi discovered it after years while he was in prison in South Africa, and since he put it on the table next to him as his inspirational book.

For us, the story began four decades ago...

To spread Non-Violence in Lebanon and in other Arab countries: it was a challenge, an adventure. Especially since we set out when we were young in 1983 in the midst of the civil war in Lebanon. Our path made its way between the war barriers that smashed the country, while we insisted on acting and going to all regions, and on more than one occasion we were exposed to the danger of death or disappearance... From the very beginning, we understood that it was all about "nurturing" marginalized, unknown and even refused NON-VIOLENCE by many who are rather glorifying violence. Thus, it seems that our hope in Non-Violence was a struggle and daily efforts with perseverance given the exceptional context of violence in which we embarked in favor of Non-Violence. It was the Truth we were looking for, just like Gandhi who offered us this "Non-Violence" (a-himsa). What we have done is established Non-Violence forever and made it rooted in society. It's done. This is history. It was the first opportunity of its kind for the Arab Non-Violence to be built in such depth and breadth, without meaning that there were no nonviolent people before us in Lebanon and the Arab countries.

As you may know, the word Non-Violence is evident in its rejection of violence and its confrontation with violence. It consists in placing the NO before the word 'violence', and Gandhi insisted on this, in order to remind us that our attitude will be definitely a No to violence, a warning to us, for every person, not to start or chose violence to solve problems and conflicts, a warning to the oppressed as well as to the oppressor. This NO is crucial to make peace and to change history.

It is as Walid Slaybi says:

"Non-Violence is two 'NOs': No to self-violence, and No to the others' violence, to injustice. The first No is individual ethical; and the second No is an efficacy both social and political. Therefore, Non-Violence is four 'Yeses': Yes to love, yes to ethics, yes to justice, yes to efficacy". However, it is interesting to note that wherever you go in the world, you say "Gandhi" and everyone knows the name! His name has become a label enough by itself, positive, valuable, as if everyone agreed on it. Even someone who doesn't know much about him, when you said "Gandhi" everyone shows peace, love and expresses pride.

But it is remarkable that many love Gandhi and do not like Non-Violence! How? Once you see people like this, and they are unfortunately many, you know that they don't know anything about Non-Violence. Gandhi embodied Non-Violence in his behavior, values, thought, writings, social and national struggles, etc. His name did not become this well-known distinguishing milestone except because he fought the political struggle and national liberation with Non-Violence from the beginning to the end of his life, his assassination. He was and he is the symbol of Non-Violence. So, how can we love him and not love what he was!

This shows us that the greatness of any human being and the greatness of any cause, can only be completed for generations to come, by awareness, training, education and the transfer of ideas, experiences and lessons.

Thus, the most wonderful thing is that THOUGHTS are in permanent travel, visiting people everywhere. Of course, it needs a human life full of love to carry it and travel with it. Gandhian values will remain a perpetual traveller, a transient of time and place, needing no permission, no passport... They simply enter into minds and hearts as well as noble ends and effective means, bearing Non-Violence as a gift to "continue to nurture generations and liberate nations," as Gandhi himself said. For Walid and me, we have made this choice for life.

To Lebanon and the Arab world, Lebanon deserves to be a model in the path of Gandhi, especially today to live the strategy of civil disobedience experimented by Gandhi, by the people struggling against the sectarian system, the corruption, militias, impoverishment, the whole deterioration of this beautiful country... YES, we need a nonviolent strategy to rebuild Hope by achieving human rights and the needed social change.

I presented to the groups of activists during the last 'uprising' in 2019, a nonviolent strategy, and I am glad to tell you how much they were impressed and amazed by "the political imagination of the Non-Violence"! Only the Non-Violence of Gandhi can bring hope and change; only Non-Violence. And to say the same about the Arab societies which are in dire need of Non-Violence, to face wars, extremism, occupation, dictatorship, gender discrimination, traditions of violence, corruption, militarization, etc.

To our dear friend Louis Campana, I am pleased to express to him a heartfelt thank you. MERCI cher ami. Thanks to his initiative, our names have reached the Bajaj Foundation and its award. He received himself this award in 2008, then submitted a proposal to grant the award to the late French nonviolent philosopher Jean-Marie Muller, who received it in 2013, and then to the university professor from Gaza - Palestine who has become a believer in Non-Violence, Ziad Medoukh, who received it in 2017. Of course, I would like to thank both of them for the letter of recommendation: Jean-Marie Muller, our friend who passed away in December 2021, whom we have known since 1989, and then introduced him to the Arab world over a quarter of a century, with the translation of nine of his books and dozens of texts, which made him one of the most nonviolent thinkers disseminated in Arabic. And a word about our friend Ziad Medoukh, who began training in Non-Violence with us since 2005 in Lebanon, and then was one of the first students at our university. Greetings to him, to Palestine and to Gaza suffering from a fifteen-year siege.

To the Awardees today, I congratulate you for the recognition of your peaceful efforts in social, technological and development work in rural areas for women and children and for constructive work. And of course, To INDIA, Greetings to the people of India, and to the decision makers who have the privilege to be the citizens of Gandhi's home. My wish is to see India always follow Gandhi's footsteps in the politics of Non-Violence. Gandhi is the model who has become the property of the world, not just of

a country. India, of course, cherishes and rejoices for itself in this great man who honored her name, Gandhi.

