



Dr. Raghunath Mashelkar
Chairman, Council of Advisers, Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation

Our revered Chief Guest, Chief Justice Dr D Y Chandrachud, our beloved Chairman Shekharji Bajaj, distinguished members of the Bajaj family, eminent jury members, proud awardees, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to you all and especially welcome and thank our honourable Chief Guest for gracing this very special evening of celebration of our Gandhian warriors, as we call them.

Just a few days ago, the Vice President of India said the following about you Sir, and I quote: “Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud is in mission mode to secure, particularly for the marginalised sections, availability of legal aid and access to justice with ease.”

Sir, he made a special mention about your affirmative, innovative people-centric initiatives that are turning out to be a gamechanger for the vulnerable segments of society.

In this context, Mahatma Gandhi’s two quotes are most pertinent.

The first is, I quote “Justice should become cheap and expeditious. Today it is the luxury of the rich and the joy of the gambler.”

The second is, I quote “The first condition of nonviolence is justice all round, in every department of life.”

You are leading the war on both these challenges.

So, ladies and gentlemen, it is our fortune that we have such legendary Gandhian Warrior as our Chief Guest today. Let’s give him a big round of applause.

As we know, Jamnalal ji was an ardent Mahatma Gandhi follower. He practiced Gandhian ethics in every sphere of his life – political, social, business and personal. Therefore, the awards in his name have been given today to those exceptional individuals, who are committed to preserving, protecting and promoting Gandhian values.

I also wish to pay homage to Shri Ramakrishna ji Bajaj, whose centenary year we are celebrating. Ramkrishnaji personified and championed Gandhian principles of trusteeship, ethical governance, and swadeshi all his life.

I recently visited the amazing exhibition created by Smt Minal Bajaj to illustrate the illuminating life and work of Ramkrishna ji. I was so inspired that I suggested that it should be taken around the country to inform, inspire and influence the NextGen with the way the values of equity, ethics and equanimity that Ramkrishnaji had practiced throughout his life.

Also wish to remember our beloved Rahul bhai. It is hard to believe that he is no more. But to all of us, he is everywhere, such has been the amazing impact that he has made with his human values, his spirit, his inspiration, his courage, his compassion, his commitment.

Next, I want to pay homage to legendary Dr M S Swaminathan, who left for his heavenly abode 72 days ago. He has been associated with the Foundation since the beginning of the Foundation's journey in 1977. His contribution as Member of the Council of Advisors, as Chairman of the selection committees of Awards for Application of as also for Promoting Gandhian Values Outside India have most valuable. The Foundation shall remain eternally grateful to Dr Swaminathan.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me share an interesting experience that I had recently in Buckingham Palace on 12 October. His majesty King Charles gave away the 2022/2023 Queen Elizabeth Engineering Prizes. These are considered as equivalent of Nobel Prizes in Engineering. I have been privileged to be a jury member, so I was an invitee. His Majesty King Charles had a brief word with each of the jury members.

With me, the brief discussion was on inclusive innovation. And can you guess whom he mentioned with much admiration? It was our very own Bunker Roy. He said as to how he admired Bunker for his barefoot college, which, as we know, is an exemplar in rural empowerment and sustainability. HM King Charles specifically mentioned about the power of decentralization and the power of Gandhian thoughts in creating a better world. I found our brief conversation inspiring.

My memories went back to the year 2010, when I had conceptualized & edited a book called 'Timeless Inspirator: Reliving Gandhi' on behalf of Gandhi National Memorial

Society, of which I am a trustee. The 50 eminent achievers and thought leaders, who contributed, all opined unanimously that the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi were even more relevant in the 21st-century today than they were in the 20th century.

As an example, take Gandhiji's teachings on resolving conflicts through dialogue, negotiation, and compromise rather than the currently used aggressive and confrontational methods that are resulting in tragic loss of innocent lives, whether it is Ukraine, Gaza, and even our very own Manipur, although in some different context.

Mahatma Gandhi had said "The simplest acts of kindness are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowing in prayer".

Note that he asks for 'acts' and not for just 'thoughts.' That means compassion, which is much more than sympathy or empathy.

Recently, we had the privilege of hosting Kailashji for a prestigious inspiration series, called LEAP, that is 'Leadership Access Program' that I started as Chairman of Reliance Innovation Council.

There, we heard the compelling thoughts of Kailashji on compassion. He said that compassion starts with cognisance of pain of others. Then one has to feel the same pain oneself. And then follows the action to reduce the pain. That is what compassion is all about.

Kailashji has been making a clarion call to join the Global Compassion Movement. The whole world should join this movement. That's the only way to creating a better world.

Finally, this evening belongs to our awardees, our Gandhian warriors. You have made yeoman contributions.

We salute you not only for your inspiring life and work but also the way, with such amazing perseverance and passion, you have pursued a noble purpose, creating a better world for all, with timeless Gandhian values.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's give them yet another thunderous round of applause.

Thank you.

