



Shekhar Bajaj

Chairman, Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation

Namaste to our esteemed guests. It's my privilege to welcome you to the 46th Jamnalal Bajaj Awards, honouring those who are the flag bearers of selfless service.

We are fortunate to have Dr. Abhay Bang as Chief Guest with us. A true visionary in public health whose life's work embodies the values upheld by Jamnalal Bajaj.

Dr. Bang's journey began in Sevagram Ashram, near Wardha, thus drawing early inspiration from Gandhian values. He spent his growing years with Acharya Vinoba Bhave who was Gandhiji's foremost disciple. He studied medicine and later went to John's Hopkins University to study Public Health.

With his wife, Dr. Rani Bang, he co-founded SEARCH (Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health) in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, in 1985. Those who know Gadchiroli, will also know it as one of the tribal districts of India, a difficult region to access, surrounded by jungles and rough terrain.

Dr Abhay and Dr Rani Bang researched and worked with 150 villages to develop a model of community-based healthcare that addressed gynaecological diseases among rural women. This model has since shaped healthcare policies in India and internationally.

Their Home-Based Newborn and Child Care program was adopted by the Government of India in 2017. Dr. Bang also introduced 'Muktipath,' an initiative to reduce tobacco and alcohol use.

His achievements include landmark reports on tribal health and over 60 research publications. His work has been honoured with the Padma Shri, WHO Public Health Champion and National Council Award amongst others.

Dr Bang received the Mahatma Gandhi Award for Humanitarian Service for his commitment to rural healthcare.

He has lectured in over 20 countries. Dr Bang, it's our privilege to have you amongst us. Though Dr. Rani Bang cannot join us due to health reasons, her contributions remain central to their shared mission.

Our gathering today is to congratulate four exceptional Jamnalal Bajaj Award winners – Shri Girija Nandan, Smt. Rashmi Bharti, Dr. Tulasi Munda and Reverend Erik Kumedisa.

Girija Nandan is committed to social justice and community development in Bihar and Jharkhand. Rashmi Bharti has created livelihood opportunities through development of appropriate technology in 108 villages in Uttarakhand.

Dr Tulasi Munda has created history by providing education and schools to the deprived children in Orissa. The International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values Outside India recipient is Reverend Erik Kumedisa from Congo. He has set up the Gandhi Monks Community, to promote non-violence.

You will shortly hear more about their work. But there is one quality our winners have in common. It's the commitment to promoting the principles of selfless service, ethical leadership and social responsibility. These were values Jamnalal Bajaj championed throughout his life.

The Jammalal Bajaj Foundation was established by Jammalalji's son Ramkrishna Bajaj in 1977. This award recognizes and rewards individuals who have made significant contributions to Gandhian constructive work, societal development and continued the legacy of Jammalal Bajaj's life of philanthropy.

Ramkrishnaji, my father, played a pivotal role in India's industrial, business and philanthropic spheres. Known for his ethical approach, he believed that business should serve the greater good of society, upholding values over material gains.

This award serves as a motivation for all of us to reflect on Gandhiji and Jammalal Bajaj's principles. They believed in uplifting people, regardless of their background or status.

In our contemporary society, the core value of humanity appears to be waning, overshadowed by a sense of exclusivity. Many seem focussed on personal ambitions and professional aspirations while the broader societal connections and community responsibilities are neglected.

We must revive principles of compassion and inclusivity, to build a collective spirit that prioritizes the well-being of 'all' over 'individual gain'. To care for others and to look beyond ourselves.

As Chairman of the Jammalal Bajaj Foundation, I am committed to upholding the legacy of my predecessors, Ramkrishna Bajaj and Rahul Bajaj.

I am grateful to our Chief Guest, awardees, and the Council of Advisers and Selection Committees for their time and contribution. Once again, I congratulate all our winners from India and overseas for their work and the difference they have made to our world.

Thank you and let the spirit of positive change continue to inspire us all.

