



Mr. Mohan Hirabai Hiralal
Recipient
Constructive Work Award 2016

The dignitaries seated on the dais, brothers and sisters,

I am thankful to Bajaj Foundation and the selection committee for considering me worthy of the award instituted in the name of Jamnalaji Bajaj, one of the closest co-workers of Gandhiji.

Injustices, terrorism, oppression and exploitation are tormenting the world today. It is being ground down by those lording over it. It is plagued with the menace of war and piling of arms. Science has become a slave of economic and political power. Gandhi is a symbol of the efforts of human kind to break out of these shackles.

On one hand, economic growth is accelerating and some are getting richer, while on the other the gap between the rich and the poor is widening and unemployment is rising. Natural resources are being indiscriminately plundered in the thoughtless race for so-called development. Life itself is in peril. Power of arms or the State cannot pull the world out of this impasse. People's power alone can do this. And such power can be generated in a community that is desirous of the rise, the uplift of all.

In terms of the spirit of the Constitution, the country means 'we, the people'. To have the same power and prestige is everyone's prerogative. If we believe in this axiom, we will have to follow the non-violent path of taking decisions by consensus instead of the violent path of taking decisions by majority.

The village community of Mendha (Lekha), a village in the Gadchiroli district in central India has taken the lead in this regard and shown to the world the way out of the present impasse. It has proved that it is possible to take decisions regarding the village in the gram sabha by consensus and that non-violence can successfully confront violence. I have experienced this since 1987, during the course of working with this village as an associate. The villagers actually wait for consensus even if a poor adivasi woman is in disagreement, and they know very well that it is in everyone's interest to do so. The question is, when will 'we, the people' understand this?

Power is inherent in every human being. Its revelation needs two basic structures and one slogan. The two basic structures are:

(1) Gramsabha / Mohallasabha: The primary political unit of village or mohalla community where everyone has agreed that all decisions should be taken in the gram sabha by consensus; and decisions are taken by the people themselves instead of delegating power to any representatives.

(2) Study Circle: The study circle consisting of the villagers interested in study, where issues are discussed with the clear understanding that no decision is to be taken. So there is no reservation about the participation of outsiders.

The slogan is:

In the state and at the centre, our government;

In our village/mohalla, we ourselves are the government!

When decisions are taken transparently, with everyone's participation and by informed consensus, the power that becomes manifest in the concerned village or mohalla community is invincible.

I humbly dedicate this award to all the village and mohalla communities, which are wedded to consensus decision-making and non-violence, or would follow this path in future.

Our mantra is '*Jai Jagat*'. Our tantra (technique) is 'village or mohalla swaraj'.

Thanks!

