

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE OCCASION OF 21ST CONVOCATION OF NALSAR
UNIVERSITY OF LAW**

Hyderabad, September 28, 2024

I convey my hearty congratulations to all the students who have been awarded their degrees in this convocation.

I share the joy of those students who have received medals for their extraordinary accomplishments.

I appreciate the contribution of the faculty-members and the entire team of the University in helping the students reach a major milestone in their life and career.

I understand the sense of fulfilment among the family-members who have been helping and encouraging the students.

I admire the efforts of NALSAR in taking care of issues concerning disability, access to justice, prison and juvenile justice, and legal aid. I am happy to note that NALSAR has set up an Animal Law Centre. It reminds me of my tenure as the Minister for Department of Fisheries and Animal Resources Development in Odisha nearly 20 years ago. There, I had realised that there must be wide-spread efforts to sensitise people about protection and welfare of animals. I expect the younger generations to protect animals and birds, trees and water-bodies as necessities for wellbeing of the humanity. NALSAR's Animal Law Centre is a good step in that direction.

I am glad that this University is also focusing on Artificial Intelligence as an area of study. In the global legal scenario, jurists and judges are seized with the matter of consulting with algorithms for evaluating parties in a dispute. As future legal professionals, the students passing out today should be prepared to deal with rapid changes induced by technology.

They should use technology as a tool for professional advancement and also as a means of social justice.

Dear students,

For a great country like ours, a sense of history arouses national pride and aspirations. Democratic traditions and practices of ancient India were highlighted by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his concluding speech at the Constituent Assembly.

The system for administration of justice reflects the prevailing social and cultural environment of a society. Nearly 2300 years ago, the ambassador from Macedonia in the court of Chandragupta Maurya, Megasthenes described Indians as remarkably law-abiding people. Chandragupta Maurya's minister Chanakya, in his celebrated work 'Artha-Shastra', had advised that a bench of three magistrates be set up for every ten villages, with higher courts in districts and provinces. A bench of judges was preferred to individual judges. Artha-Shastra enumerates the high standards set for the officers responsible for administration of justice. It also suggests that no private meetings should be allowed between judges and litigants until cases were settled. Impartial administration of justice was given utmost importance.

A rich corpus of legal literature was developed in different parts of ancient India. One of the most important legal references, the Apastamba Sutra is said to have been written in this very Deccan region.

Dear students,

I have shared these historical details with you to remind you of the high legal traditions of our country. Our proven excellence in the past will inspire you to re-discover our collective genius.

Father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi gave up a successful legal career to fight for justice on a much larger scale. Yet, his articulation like a lawyer was evident in his advocacy for the great causes he took up. His first

Satyagraha in India, at Champaran, was launched for securing justice for the poor farmers exploited by Indigo planters. As part of the satyagraha, Gandhiji and his associates like Dr Rajendra Prasad, who was also a lawyer, prepared detailed documents concerning each and every farmer. This systematic and voluminous documentation, prepared over several days, strengthened the Satyagraha, forcing the government to decide in favour of the farmers. Thus, Gandhiji blended compassion with legal acumen and won several battles against the most powerful empire the world has ever seen. This blend of compassion and legal expertise is a formula for success which also contains sensitivity and fairness. This can be a template for a legal professional who wants to have a meaningful and successful career and life.

Our Constitution contains the ideals of our freedom struggle, namely, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. The ideal of equality, enshrined in the Preamble and Fundamental Rights, also finds expression in one of the Directive Principles of State Policy concerning delivery of justice. The Directive seeks to provide equal justice and free legal aid. It makes the State responsible "...to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities." The vision statement of your institution also underlines a particular focus on social justice to the marginalised communities. Unfortunately, a poor person does not get the same access to justice as a rich person. This unfair situation must change for the better. I expect your generation of legal professionals to be the change agents.

Dear students,

Advocates are officers of the courts. As advocates, you will have a duty to assist the court in dispensing justice, apart from taking care of the interests of your clients. Many of you may be joining corporate entities or legal firms as advisers or associates. It is your duty to give your advice in line with high ethical standards. Whatever role you choose as a legal professional, always stick to the values of integrity and courage. Speaking truth to power makes you more powerful.

I have observed that girl students have out-numbered boys as medal-winners. Although, the total number of girl students who received degrees today is a little less than that of the boys. I have seen this pattern across many institutions of higher education. This demonstrates that despite several limitations which they still have to face, our daughters are making us proud with their excellence. I convey my special appreciation for the girl students in today's convocation. I also expect these girls to help and empower other women and girls who are under-privileged.

NALSAR has taken lead in several areas. In today's convocation, members of Bar and Bench are gathered here. Every segment of the society is a stakeholder in promoting safety of women. I urge upon NALSAR, including its alumni, to enlist the support of all stakeholders and help in setting up a nationwide network of women advocates and law students. This network will work with the mandate to make concerted efforts to prevent atrocities against women and deal with cases of such atrocities.

Dear students,

I am sure you will utilise your education in NALSAR as an effective instrument of social justice and development. With this approach, you will add meaning to your success. You will also have the satisfaction of making contribution to our national goals. I wish you a very bright future.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!