

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE SPECIAL CONVOCATION OF
THE TAMIL NADU DR AMBEDKAR LAW UNIVERSITY**

Chennai, July 13, 2019

1. I am extremely happy to be among all of you today for this special convocation of the Tamil Nadu Dr Ambedkar Law University. Today, three eminent jurists - Justice Sathasivam, Justice Bobde and Justice Tahilramani are being conferred LL.D. (Honoris Causa) degrees for their distinguished services to law and justice. I am told that this is the first time in the country that a university is conferring LL.D (Honoris Causa) degrees on three jurists on the same occasion.
2. These three jurists have had distinguished careers. Former Chief Justice of India, Justice Sathasivam served as a Judge in the Supreme Court, High Court of Punjab and Haryana and Madras High Court. Justice Bobde was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court in 2013, and prior to that served as the Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court and as a Judge at the Bombay High Court. Justice Tahilramani who took over as the Chief Justice of Madras High Court in 2018, had served as a Judge of the Bombay High Court since 2001, including serving as the Acting Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court. She is the second successive woman Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, and she is a role model for millions of Indians, especially for our daughters. I congratulate these three eminent jurists for being conferred LL.D. (Honoris Causa) degrees and appreciate the University's decision to recognise their contribution to the field of jurisprudence.
3. This University was established by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 1997 for the advancement of knowledge in the field of law, to promote legal education and to further social justice. The University was inaugurated by my predecessor as the

President of India, the late Shri K.R. Narayanan. In two decades of its existence, the University has added lustre to the task of legal education and research in Tamil Nadu and India.

4. I am told that more than twenty thousand students are currently enrolled in courses offered by the University and its affiliate colleges spread across Tamil Nadu. I understand that the University also offers hybrid courses like B.Com-LLB and BCA-LLB. Such courses help expand the knowledge horizons and career opportunities of students. The Tamil Nadu Dr Ambedkar Law University has established a strong reputation both in teaching and research and is doing extremely well to meet its foundational objectives. Nothing less is to be expected from a University that is named after the Chief Architect of our Constitution, Babasaheb Dr B. R. Ambedkar.
5. Having been a student of law and lawyer myself, I would like to emphasise the significance of legal education for nation building and the role that universities, especially law universities, play in this regard. As a society and nation governed by the rule of law, we cannot but emphasise the text of, as well as spirit and intent behind, laws.
6. As our nation, society and economy evolve, so does the legal profession. While litigation in the courtroom remains at the core of legal practice, a law graduate finds many avenues open to him or her that were simply not available to previous generations.
7. Over the years, our understanding of law and its applications has become larger as well as more sophisticated. The nuances of privacy and of individual choice; the deeper interrogation of the concept of rights and responsibilities; and the search for a happy balance between autonomy for innovation and regulation for the greater common good in

fields such as biotechnology and communication technology are all examples.

8. Yet, in all this, are we paying enough attention to issues of legal infrastructure and access to justice, especially for ordinary citizens? There is a need to enhance legal literacy and simplify legal rules. It is important to not only take justice to the people, but also to make it understandable to litigating parties in a language they know. Perhaps a system could be evolved whereby certified translated copies of judgements are made available by the High Courts in the local or regional language. I had made this suggestion in October 2017 while addressing the Valedictory Ceremony of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the High Court of Kerala in Kochi. A few days later I visited Chhattisgarh, where I discussed this idea with the then Chief Justice of the High Court of Chhattisgarh Justice T. B. Radhakrishnan, who now is the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court. And within a few days, the High Court of Chhattisgarh implemented the suggestion, and since then litigants can avail translated copies of the judgments of the High Court of Chhattisgarh in Hindi. I am happy to learn that some other High Courts have also responded to the suggestion positively. The language of certified copies could be Malayalam in the Kerala High Court or Tamil in the Madras High Court, as the case may be.
9. The need to make the provision of justice speedier and affordable places a great responsibility on the lawyer community. An advocate is a law officer of the court. He or she has a responsibility to the client, but also a duty to assist the court in delivery of justice. Our legal system has a reputation for being expensive and for being prone to delays. There are some who tend to use and abuse the instrument of adjournments as a tactic to slow down proceedings, rather than a response to a genuine emergency. This makes obtaining justice costly for the litigant. It would be a travesty of our republican ethic if a poor person did not get the same

access to the law as a rich person. The legal profession must continue to address this collectively.

10. All those who serve in the legal profession – whether they are judges, lawyers, court officers and even those teaching law – have a key responsibility in ensuring the primacy of rule of law. Their work has an impact that is often wide and far-reaching. They are one of the crucial elements in the making of a just and fair society. I am confident that legal professionals shall continue to discharge their responsibility while maintaining the highest standards of public ethics. Society expects nothing less than the best from them.

11. As I conclude, I once again congratulate the three eminent jurists who have been conferred LL.D. (Honoris Causa) degrees today. I wish them, and I wish this University and all those associated with it, the very best for the future.

Thank you
Jai Hind!