



# English rendering of the Excerpts of PM's address at the valedictory function of National Law Day, 2017

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Chief Justice of the country, Justice Shri Dipak Misra, my colleague in the cabinet and Law and Justice Minister, Shri Ravi Sankar Prasad, Chairman of Law Commission, Dr. Justice B.S. Chauhan, Vice Chairman of Niti Aayog, Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Minister of State for Law and Justice, Shri P.P. Choudhary and all other dignitaries present in this hall.

Brothers and sisters,

This day today is as important for the Indian democracy as it is sacred. If there is anything called the spirit of our democratic institutions it is our Constitution. The adoption of this written text 68 years ago was a historic moment. On that day, we as a nation decided the directives and rules that would lead us in future. Each and every word of those rules, of the Constitution is holy and sacred for us.

Today is also an occasion to bow down to our Constitution makers. After independence when crores of people dreamed of moving ahead with new hopes and their spirit was high despite adverse conditions prevailing at that time it was not an easy task to give a Constitution acceptable to all. In a country which has more than a dozen religions, which has more than a hundred languages and more than 1,700 dialects, where people who have been living even in forests besides in cities and towns with their own faiths it was not an easy task to bring all of them on one platform and prepare this historic document that respects their faiths.

Every person sitting in this hall is witness to the fact that our Constitution cleared all the tests that came up from time to time. Our Constitution has proved all those people wrong who used to say that our Constitution will not be able to provide solutions to all the problems that our country would face in the days to come.

There is not a single subject that has not been explained, on which direction and guidelines have not been given in our Constitution. Keeping this feature of our Constitution in mind the interim Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Shri Sachchidanand Sinha Ji had said: **"If any manmade document can be called immortal then it is the Constitution of India."**

Our Constitution is as alive as it is sensitive. It is equally capable as well as accountable. Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar himself had said about the Constitution that it was workable and flexible and it was capable of keeping the country together in the times of war and peace.' Baba Saheb also said that if any wrong is committed keeping the provisions of the Constitution in mind then it will not be the Constitution but institution implementing the provisions of the Constitution will be at fault.

Brothers and sisters, in these past 68 years this Constitution has guided us like a guardian to follow the righteous path. As a guardian our constitution has maintained us on the path of democracy, it has prevented us from wandering on the wrong path. And as a part of the family of this guardian we all are present here in this hall. Government, judiciary and bureaucracy we all are like a member of this family.

Friends, today the Constitution day has posed an important question to us. As the members of a family, have we been following those values which have been expected of us by our guardian, by our Constitution? Have we been working to cooperate with each other to strengthen each other like the members of a family?

Brothers and sisters, today this question is not only before the people of judiciary or before the government but it is before all those institutions which have been looked up at by millions and millions of people for realisation of their hopes. Every step, every decision of these institutions impacts the lives of people. The question is that whether these institutions have been cooperating, supporting and strengthening each other while understanding the requirements of the country for the development, while understanding the aspirations of people?

I don't exactly remember it but I would like to share a small story with you. There is a lot of discussion over what is the difference between the hell and heaven. And those wise people used to explain it in their own way. They used to tell that some people once decided to show what is hell and what is heaven to some curious ones. They were shown both the hell and heaven. There were heaps of grains and happiness and prosperity in both the hell and heaven. The occupants of the heaven were very happy but the occupants of the hell were in a very bad situation. And it was the situation of people there that they had very long spoons tied to their hands. The spoon extended from their shoulder to beyond their hands so that they could not bend their hands. Hands of both the occupants of hell and heaven were tied in the same manner. However, those people who were in the hell when they tried to eat food then the meal used to fall behind their back and that's why they were starving to death. Everything was there but they were occupied only with this thing. However, the situation of heaven was different. Their hands were also tied in a bamboo strap in the same manner so that it cannot bend. But they have found a way, they used to lift the food and offer it to the person sitting in front of them. The other person used to lift food and offer it to the person feeding him. All the stores were brimming with the food grain but those people who adopted the path of strengthening others made it heaven for themselves and those who followed the path of strengthening themselves have made it hell for themselves.

Brothers and sisters, 75 years ago when in 1942 Gandhi Ji had made an appeal for the quit India movement the the nation found a new energy. This energy was properly channelized in every village, every lane, every city and every town and as a result of it we got the independence after five years. Now, when we will celebrate the 75 years of our independence after five years then we will have to work together to realise the dream of our freedom fighters. And for this purpose, every institution that obtains power from constitution will have to channelise its energy and will have to devote itself only for one purpose to realise the dream of a New India.

Friends, today this thing is very important as after several decades this kind of strong sentiments of public have been witnessed in our country. Today, India is the youngest country of the world. And every constitutional body of the country is required to work collectively in order to provide direction to this young energy. We have missed out on this opportunity in the 20th century. And in order to take India to new heights in the 21st century, in order to make it a New India all of us will have to make a pledge. The pledge of working together. The pledge to strengthen each other.

Brothers and sisters, in one of the debates of the Constituent Assembly, in order to meet the challenges before the country Dr. Rajendra Prasad had thoroughly explained the importance of coming together. He said: **"We assure everyone that we will work relentlessly to eradicate poverty, to remove filth, to end hunger and disease, to abolish discrimination and exploitation and to ensure better living conditions. We are out on a big mission. We hope, we will get everybody's cooperation and sympathy in this move and get support of every section of the society."**

Brothers and sisters, because of this thinking of those great souls associated with the making of the constitution our constitution is being considered a social document. This is just not a book of law but it also has a social vision. 14 August 1947, it means this thing which was said by Rajendra Babu just moments before the independence is equally relevant today. Eventually the goal of all of us is to make the life of common man of the country better and set him free from poverty-filth, set him free from hunger and disease. To provide him equal opportunity, to provide him his rights. And these things can only be done by restoring a balance in every institution and by making a pledge.

In the same meeting, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan made another important submission. He said: **“Till the time we eradicate corruption in high offices, uproot nepotism, remove the greed for power, profiteering and black marketing neither will we be able to increase efficiency in administration nor be able to easily provide the things people need in their day to day lives.”**

Friends, these things were just moments before the independence. 14 August 1947, there was a sense of responsibility and along with the sense of an internal weakness of the country there was also a sense of how to overcome these weaknesses. It's unfortunate that so many years after the independence these internal weaknesses have not been removed. That is why it is essential to deliberate this issue at all the three levels of executive, judiciary and legislature as how to move ahead in these changed circumstances. We don't have to declare others as right or wrong. We all know our weakness and strengths.

Brothers and sisters, this time is like a golden period for the country. This kind of feeling of self confidence in the country has been generated after several years. Certainly, the will power of 1.25 billion Indians have been working as a basis for this thing. And we have to move forward to realise the dream of a New India on the basis of this positive atmosphere. There is no dearth of capability and resources but we must keep the time in our minds. If we think that we have enough time, if we believe that everything will be done by future generations, every risk will be taken by them then the history will never forgive us. Whatever we are required to do, we have to do it now, do it in this period only. We can't stop by believing that we will not be there by the time results will be visible.

Friends, we may or may not be alive but the country will remain. The systems that we will leave behind should be such that would create a safe, confident and self-reliant India. A system that will make people's lives easier, that increases their ease of living.

Friends, I have always believed that the government's role should be more of a facilitator than a regulator. Today, even you will be experiencing this thing that how soon your passport is made. Maximum two to three days. Otherwise, it used to take a month or two. For the last two-three times you did not have to wait for months for getting the income tax refund. You must be aware that the system has acquired a speed. And this pace is not only making your life easier but it is also making the lives of middle class, poor people, all the people of the country easier.

Just imagine how much time and money of the youth have been saved by removing the requirement of an interview for the vacancies of group C and D. Earlier they were required to get the documents attested from a gazetted officer, now it is no longer required. And due to this thing they don't have to run from pillar to the post. They don't have to call four people to find out whether anyone of them knows a gazetted officer, whether anyone of them knows an MP or MLA.

Friends, you will be surprised to know that in our country 27,000 crore rupees were lying unclaimed. This money was deposited by workers, by laborers in their PF accounts and later it was not claimed due to the change of employer. Once someone has left a city then who is able to go back, who has time to make efforts for this thing. This was a big problem for our workers, our middle class. It was solved by this government by creating Universal Account Number. Now an employee no matter where he or she works he or she will have UAN number and can withdraw his or her provident fund with the help of this UAN number.

Friends, it has been said in Brihदारanyak Upnishad:

Tadetat – Kshatrasya Kshatram Yad Dharmah,

Tasmad Dharmat Param Nasti,

Atho Abaleeyan Baleeyam Sama Sanshate Dharmen,

Yatha Ragya Evam.

It means law is the emperor of emperors and there is nothing above it. The power of an emperor lies in the rule of law and it is the rule of law that empowers, that gives the poor, the weak the courage to fight with the mighty. Our government has tried to increase the ease of living by following the formula of repealing the old laws and creating new laws.

In the last three and three and a half years more than 1,200 old laws have been repealed. As Sardar Patel had unified the country similarly the work of unifying the country in a common thread has been performed through GST. The dream of one nation-one tax has been realised after decades. Similarly, be it the amendment in the law for the disabled persons, be it making the ST/SC law more stringent or be it RERA for curbing the arbitrariness of builders, all these things have been done so that the problems faced by the common man in their routine life can be minimized.

Friends, everyone present in this hall is aware that despite a direction from the Supreme Court the constitution of a SIT on black money was delayed by three years and it was constituted within three days of formation of this government. This decision was equally important for common man as much as it was against black money and corruption. Every corruption, every transaction of black money in the country deprives poor of their rights in some or some other way, it creates problem in poor's life.

Brothers and sisters, we have taken a lot of small and big decisions but they were taken while keeping in the mind the problems faced by the public. Our decisions were not only appropriate but they also reflected the sensitiveness of the government. Friends, the unprecedented improvement in the ease of doing business ranking of the country is the direct outcome of focusing on the ease of living. While we were at the 142nd spot in terms of ease of doing business ranking before 2014, now we have reached to the 100th position. I'm happy that several steps have been taken by our judiciary in this direction. I've been told that this year 18 lakh pre-litigation and 22 lakh pending cases have been solved only through the Lok Adalats conducted at the national level.

Brothers and sisters, this data is also proof of the fact that such kind of disputes that can be solved through mediation and mutual discussion have also been agitated before our courts in large numbers. I don't know that these cases were stuck for how many years. But resolution of these disputes have certainly reduced the burden on our courts. It has also enhanced the respect for Lok Adalats in our country. I feel that these Lok Adalats can play an important role in solving those millions and millions of pending cases in our country.

I've been told that in September this year the Chief Justice of India has also written letters to all the judges of the high courts about the pending cases. He has considered the delays in the hearings of appeals as a weakness of our Criminal Justice System. I also liked this suggestion very much that special benches can hear some cases even on Saturdays. In order to reduce the pendency of cases states like Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have been experimenting with evening courts. This kind of experiments can be repeated in other states as well.

Friends, increasing use of technology in the judicial system will also be helpful in making the people's lives easier, in enhancing the ease of living. The more we expand e-Courts, the more we expand National Judicial Data Grid, the more it will reduce the problems faced by the people in courts. When the courts of the country will be connected through video conferencing then it will increase the convenience of both the courts and jail administration. I've been informed that in the last two years nearly five hundred courts have been connected with jails through video conferencing. I've also been told about the Tele Law Scheme through which legal advice has been given to poor people living in villages, living in far flung areas. The more this scheme will be expanded the more it will benefit public. I also very much liked one innovative idea of justice clock. This clock has recently been installed in the Department of Justice and the information about Top Performing District Courts is being obtained through this clock. Plans are afoot for installation of this kind of justice clocks in the courts throughout the country. Justice Clock, in a way this is a mechanism for conducting a ranking of courts.

As a kind of competition is being started among the cities following the start of cleanliness ranking, as a feeling of competition has been instilled in the colleges after the start of their ranking similarly this expansion of Justice Clock system and if necessary after making some modifications it can be used for bringing about some kind of professional competition among the courts. It's my experience that as soon as this feeling of competition is there then systems pick up the pace and we can see more improvement in less time. I'm not an expert of law but I feel that competition among the courts will also

improve ease of access to justice and ease of living. Yesterday, **respected Mr. President has expressed concern over the fact that the poor had been afraid of knocking the doors of the courts to get justice. Friends, the objective of all our efforts should be that poor people are no longer afraid of courts, they should get timely justice and his expenses on legal processes of courts should come down.**

Friends, today on the occasion of constitution day I'd like to particularly wish those youth who are going to get the right to vote from the 1st of January 2018. These are those youth who have been born in the 21st century and just after a few months they will vote in the elections for the first time. The responsibility of making the 21st century a century of India lies on the shoulders of these youth. And it's the responsibility of all of us to provide this kind of system to these youth that empowers them, that strengthens them.

In this context, I'd like to raise an extremely important issue before you intellectuals. This is the issue of conducting simultaneous elections in both the centre and states. A debate on the issue has been started in recent times. Some political parties have also expressed concerns over the burden, over the resources of the country that are needed for conducting elections at the interval of every 4-6 months.

For example, if we talk about the expenses of conducting general elections in 2009 then it was almost Rs. 1,100 crore whereas nearly Rs. 4,000 crores were spent on conducting the general election in 2014. And the money spent by candidates was in addition to this figure. The requirement to deploy thousands of employees for every election and the movement of lakhs of security force personnel create pressure upon the system. And once the model code of conduct has been imposed then it is difficult for government to take decision. On the contrary to this situation there are several countries in the world where there is a fixed date for the election and people know when the elections will be conducted in their country. The benefit of this system is that these countries are not in the election mode all the time. And their policy planning process and its implementation becomes more efficient and it does not pose any burden on their resources either. India already has experience in conducting the simultaneous elections and that experience was a positive one. However, due to our shortcomings that process was broken. Today, on the auspicious occasion of constitution day I will urge you to take this discussion forward.

Brothers and sisters, when there are no restraint on any individual, government or institution then it's certain that they will face problem some day. It's the strength of our system that we improvise ourselves from time to time and move ahead in a disciplined manner. If we talk about the people's representatives and political parties then they have accepted several restraints over themselves, they have accepted those restraints in the interest of country and society.

For example, a lot of people would not be aware that the model code of conduct that is being imposed during the election time is not based on any law but political parties have voluntarily accepted it. Similarly, there are so many laws that have been passed by the politicians themselves to keep the political system under some limit. Efforts have been made to ensure probity and transparency in the politics. Be it any institution, the more powerful system of self regulation and checks and balances it has the more strong it will become and also the other organs associated with it will become more strong.

Today, when the balance of powers between the three fundamental units of our constitution is being discussed then we will have to also keep in mind that this balance between the judiciary, the legislature and the executive has been the backbone of our constitution. And due to this balance our country was able to ward off any attempt to derail it from the path of democracy during the emergency.

Friends, at that time the Supreme Court in a historic judgement has said: **"Under the basic structure of the Constitution, the three Constitutionally separated organs cannot trespass into each other's boundaries as established by the Constitution. This is the logical and natural meaning of the principle of sovereignty of the Constitution."** Baba Saheb considered the constitution as a fundamental document due to these strengths of the constitution. A document that defines the position and powers of the executive, the judiciary and the legislature.

Dr. Ambedkar had said: "The objective of the Constitution is not only limited to creation of three organs of the Union but also to define the limits of their powers. And it is also essential because if the limits are not defined the institutions will become autocratic and start exploitation. Therefore, the legislature should be free to enact any law, the executive should be free to take any decision and the Supreme Court should be free to interpret the laws." Today, we have reached here by following these teachings of Baba Saheb and celebrating this constitution day with pride. The Supreme Court has emphasised on this feature of the constitution, on this balance between the three institutions related to the basic structure of the constitution in several of its judgements. In 1967, the Supreme Court has said in one of its verdicts: **"Our Constitution has very minutely established the boundaries of the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. The Constitution expects them to exercise their inherent powers without overstepping their boundaries."**

Brothers and sisters, today, when we have been making every possible effort to realise the dream of a New India then these teachings of the constitution becomes even more relevant. We have to fulfill the expectations and desires of people while being within our limits. Today, the entire world is looking up at India with a lot of hopes. Those countries have been looking up at India for finding the solutions of so many challenges. Several countries want to walk with India shoulder to shoulder for her development. In such a situation, all of them - the legislature, the executive and the judiciary will have to move forward while keeping in the mind the limits set by the constitution.

Friends, I congratulate the law commission and Niti Aayog for organising this event. All three organs of the constitution have candidly expressed their opinions on this occasion. Several experts, intellectuals have expressed their views. And everyone's views have their own importance. This kind of dialogues are extremely essential in order to strengthen the democracy. It shows our maturity. We should collectively take forward all the actionable points obtained through this event. We should also think over how to make this process of dialogue a constant feature.

Brothers and sisters, today the time demands that all of us should strengthen each other, one institution should be able to understand the requirement of the other and also understand the challenges faced by it. When these three institutions will focus on their duties enshrined in the constitution only then they will be able to rightfully tell the citizens of the country: "Please follow your duties and think of society and country by shedding the mentality of why should I bother."

Friends, in the dispute over rights there is an apprehension that duties will take a back seat and the country cannot move ahead if we shirk our duties.

Once again I convey to all of you, to all my fellow countrymen the best wishes of the Constitution Day.

I thank all of you very much and wish that may we move ahead with a new enthusiasm, with a new pledge and with a new capability towards 2022, towards the 75th year of our independence.

Thank you very much.

Jai Hind.

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