



India has put 'Dharma' at the centre of governance: Vice President

Addresses the Members of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Advocates Associations

Posted On: 20 NOV 2017 8:52PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that India has put 'Dharma' at the centre of governance. He was addressing the Members of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Advocates Associations, in Hyderabad today. The Acting Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, Justice Ramesh Ranganathan, Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana, Shri Mohammad Mahmood Ali and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that Dharma is for the stability of society, the maintenance of social order and the general well-being and progress of human kind. Whatever conduces to the fulfillment of these objects is Dharma, he added.

The Vice President said that upholding Dharma means sustaining our civilization and if we follow the rule of law, our human society will survive and this is why we say: "Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha". He quoted Chanakya as saying "Law and morality sustain the world". We all have a stake and a role to play in making this happen in our lives, he added.

The Vice President said that the implementation of the laws and the dispensation of justice need to be much more effective, speedy and perceived to be fair and just. He further said that the conduct of lawyers, judges and the courts has a deep impact on the civilian life in this country. Dynamism of the lawyers is the foundation for "Judicial Activism", he added.

The Vice President said that justice Dispensation System, as an institution, is now at crossroads and faced with many challenges. He further said that the general decline in ethical and moral values, has affected the Justice Dispensation System as well. Lawyers must equip themselves with the changing trends and assist the Judiciary with proper input, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

" I am pleased to be with all of you this evening as it brings many pleasant memories of my association with the legal fraternity before and after completing my law degree from Andhra University. Though I had enrolled here as an Advocate long time ago, I didn't have an opportunity to be in the legal profession for long. I joined the political arena and practiced law in another form. I joined the fraternity of '**law makers**'.

I am glad to meet many of my old friends as well as new entrants practicing this noble profession in this high court.

High Court of Andhra Pradesh which celebrated its golden jubilee in the year 2006 has passed from one stage of evolution to another carving out a place of distinction for itself not only in the judicial history of the State but in its public life as well.

This High Court has the proud distinction of having contributed many jurists and judges to the Supreme Court of India: Justice Koka Subbarao, Justice Jayachandra Reddy, Justice Chinnapa Reddy, Justice Jeevan Reddy, Justice Ramaswamy, Justice Jagannadha Rao, Justice Sudarshan Reddy, Justice Jasti Chalamaswar, Justice N. V. Ramana and Justice L Nageswara Rao, the last three Hon'ble judges are now serving.

This Court also has the distinction of producing a galaxy of eminent lawyers and judges at the High Court level. We remember Justice P.A Choudary whose judgement in Saritha's case has been internationally acclaimed to say that the 'Fundamental Rights' will walk into the bedroom of the person as well, reaffirming the salutary principle of Liberty that "over his body and mind, an individual is sovereign".

We also remember Justice Jagannadha Rao for defining a new scale for calculating compensation for the victims of motor vehicle accidents.

This High Court houses some interesting historical documents like the Shri Kishan's first Public Interest Litigation in this Court opposing formation of State of Andhra Pradesh in 1957.

I am told that the handwritten copies of the petition, in original, are still available in the Registry of this Court and its judgment has been reported in Shri Kishan Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh in All India Reporter in the year 1957.

There are many stalwarts from this Bar. Shi DuvvuriNarasa Raju, Sri K. Pratap Reddy and Sri Padmanabha Reddy, Sri Venkat Reddy, Sri Movva Chandrasekhar Rao, Sri Ananta Babu, Sri B.V Subbaiah to remember only a few.

Some Advocates from this Bar have even made it to Supreme Court of India. To remember some stalwarts - Sri P.P. Rao (Padma Bhushan awardee), Sri V.R. Reddy who had also served as Solicitor General, and as Chairman of the Bar Council of India, Sri L. Nageswara Rao has the distinction of serving as Additional Solicitor General for 3 terms in different party regimes and eventually got elevated as Judge of Supreme Court. Sri P.S. Narasimha is currently serving as Additional Solicitor General.

List of the stalwarts from this Bar will not be complete without making a reference to Dr P.C. Rao(Padma Bhushan awardee), who had served as Law Secretary, Union of India and later had a long stint as Judge, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Reference to these stalwarts is sufficient to indicate the richness and diversity of the Bar. This Court has achieved so much of name and fame only because of the great quality of the lawyers of this Court.

My salutations to each one of those great men and women who have served this august institution as advocates, judges and jurists.

Dear brothers and sisters, as you well know, we have solemnly resolved through our constitution, to secure, to all our citizens, **social, economic and political justice**.

In fact, India has put "Dharma" at the centre of governance.

Let me remind ourselves what Mahabharata says:

"Dharma is for the stability of society, the maintenance of social order and the general well-being and progress of human kind. Whatever conduces to the fulfillment of these objects is Dharma."

Upholding Dharma means sustaining our civilization. If we follow the rule of law, our human society will survive.

This is why we say: **"Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha"**.

As Chanakya had also said **"Law and morality sustain the world"**.

We all have a stake and a role to play in making this happen in our lives.

The citizens are looking up to the institutions of governance like the legislature, judiciary and the executive. The expectations are that these deliver 'SURAJYA' and contribute to improvement in the quality of life. The trust and confidence that an average Indian places in these institutions is getting eroded.

The implementation of the laws and the dispensation of justice need to be much more effective, speedy and perceived to be fair and just.

The conduct of lawyers, judges and the courts has a deep impact on the civilian life in this country. Dynamism of the lawyers is the foundation for "Judicial Activism".

We have given to ourselves the democratic form of governance with the bedrock principles of 'Rule of Law' and 'Separation of Powers'. The role that the lawyers of this country play in safeguarding these constitutional values has a primary place in the legal history of this country from the days of freedom struggle till date.

Bar and the Bench, the two sides of the same coin, have a big responsibility and should look upon their work not merely as another profession but as an ethical and moral glue that keeps our national edifice together.

Courts render justice but that justice is rendered only with the able assistance of the lawyers.

Service rendered by lawyers to the litigants is a public service. Litigant reposes trust in his lawyer as an infant child reposes blind-trust on his mother. Lawyers should always stand up to the trust that the litigants repose in them.

Justice Dispensation System, as an institution, is now at crossroads and faced with many challenges. Public confidence is the cornerstone of Justice Dispensation System. This Institution cannot betray the confidence that the public repose on it.

The general decline in ethical and moral values, has affected the Justice Dispensation System as well. Being an optimist, I repose confidence on the members of the Bar to reclaim and achieve those highest moral and ethical values.

There is a huge backlog of cases, partly because of unfilled vacancies. According to Prison Statistics in India, 2015 report released by the National Crime Records Bureau, 67 per cent of the prisoners in Indian jails are under trials. According to the Law Ministry, there are 18 judges per million population, while the Law Commission has recommended 50 judges per million.

There are also complaints that lawyers tend to delay the progress in the disposal of cases. This should be avoided to restore people's trust in the system. After all, we know, Justice **Delayed Is** Justice Denied. Lawyers may not strike work, for it affects the rights of the litigants. Striking of work by lawyers is also one of the causes of delay in disposal of cases.


Deviance and crime in the Society have assumed new and complex forms. While the social benefits of advancement in science and technology cannot be ignored, it has also opened up a floodgate for commission of crimes and economic offences in more complex manner which our traditional crime investigation bureaus and the prosecutors should handle. Lawyers must equip themselves with the changing trends and assist the Judiciary with proper input.

Armed Forces are guarding our borders and keeping us safe, while the lawyers are the guardians of human rights, civil liberties, transparency in administration, Rule of Law and in maintaining checks and balances between the three organs of the State which is conceptually called as the 'Separation of Powers'.

The lawyers have been champions protecting the fragile environment and in curbing pollution. I urge all of you to keep up this sharp focus on public welfare and public interest.

We who occupy important positions and wield power have another major responsibility.

For instance, the judges and advocates have to model good behavior. Purity of thought, courtesy in speech and commitment to the constitution of our great country can inspire our youth. Any slip or casual utterance can be detrimental. Any corrupt thought or action can be an assault on country's collective consciousness. Let us steer clear of these avoidable paths.

 Friends, as you all know laws are meant to improve the lives of people and enable them to lead a dignified life. The Indian judiciary has always remained independent and played a stellar role in strengthening democracy and in ensuring socio-economic justice to the common man.

The World Justice Report ranked India at 66th position in its Rule of Index 2016. Denmark, Norway and Finland were the top three countries, while Afghanistan, Cambodia and Venezuela were at the bottom India has vast scope to improve its ranking if concerted effort is made by all the stakeholders.

In a developing country like ours, lawyers and jurists will have to play a crucial role by ensuring that nobody is denied access to justice and the poor and illiterate in particular are not deprived of their legitimate rights.

Lawyers should act as conscience-keepers of the society and take advantage of the mechanisms like Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to serve the needy and the poor.

Lawyers must be well-versed in the laws they are specializing in and constantly acquire knowledge to be updated on the latest developments. A strong and well equipped Bar will result in having a strong judiciary because judges are picked up from the Bar itself. Therefore there is every need that the products that come out of our law schools should simply be the best in the world. It is not difficult to achieve this target in a decade's time if the members of the Bar Councils show their commitment.

The legal system in the country is a good indicator of country's governance. A people- friendly, people centric, objective, non-corrupt, inclusive administration of justice can considerably enhance the 'ease of living'.

Like judges, lawyers should also observe self-imposed restrictions and also usher-in practising moral and ethical values in their professional and personal life. A lawyer has to be an 'Officer of the Court' and a 'Gentleman' in the society. Bar members shall always desist from unruly behaviour, both inside and outside the court, and set an example to the public of being a gentleman.

Every lawyer should do public service by accepting cases of poor litigants 'pro bono' and render Free Legal Aid to the needy litigants. Please do keep in mind the salutary principle that no litigant should go helpless merely because of his inability to pay the lawyer's fee.

This is the reorientation I am looking forward to as we, as a nation, have set our sights very high.

Lastly, I would like you all to remember the illustrious legacy you have inherited from legal luminaries of the yester years. They had put country first and "social, economic and political justice to all, especially those who are marginalized" as the sacred duty towards nation building. I am sure you will do your best to add to the glory of this noble profession and keep in mind the following words from the Mahabharata: **"The State can only be preserved by Dharma, under the rule of law"**. Let us create a new Bharat that not only has some of the world's best, inclusive thoughts but also demonstrate that we can live our daily lives and take action along those lines.

My good wishes to you in your endeavours.

JAI HIND!"

KSD/BK

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