

# REACTIVATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION\*

**V**ictor Hugo, the great thinker, once said – “There is one thing stronger than that of the armies of the world; and that is an idea whose time has come”. These prophetic words of wisdom are most appropriate in the context of the inauguration of the Allahabad Chapter of International Law Association.

It would have been better if today's function would have been called 'reactivation' or 'rejuvenation' rather than one of inauguration. I am told that about a decade ago, there existed the Allahabad Chapter of ILA which was quite active. But it seems that the members of the Chapter overdid and overacted and they soon felt tired. Consequently, the Allahabad Chapter went into deep slumber and became dormant. I hope that, on and after today, under the leadership of Acting Chief Justice Markandeya Katju, Dr. Justice B.S. Chauhan, organizing Chairman of ILA and Justice Dilip Gupta, this Chapter will soon be bustling with activities so as to be an example to be emulated by other Chapters in the country. I congratulate the office bearers of the Allahabad Chapter and the members thereof for reactivating and for infusing new life-giving blood in the veins of Allahabad Chapter of ILA.

A few weeks before, I was unanimously elected the Chairperson of the Indian Branch of ILA. Soon thereafter I got the opportunity of leading the Indian Delegation to the International Conference of ILA at Berlin in the month of August, this year. It provided me a unique opportunity of meeting the eminent judges, jurists, law professionals and academicians of the world. Three things were common amongst all the delegates in the conference: (1) They were all men of law, (2) They were all highly intellectual people, and (3) They had only one motto – How to develop law so as to make this world a better place to live in. I was pleasantly surprised to note the wide range of topics which came up for panel discussions in the conference. There was International Commerce, Trade and Security Regulations, Human Rights Law of Sustainable Development, Biotechnology and Water Resources were not lagging behind. We had International Arbitration and also Space Law and legal issues relating to Continental Shelf, Cultural Heritage, also for discussions. I had the privilege of co-chairing a session with Lord Slynn of Hadley, the theme whereof was 'Corporate Social Responsibility and International Law'. The topics which formed subject matter of deliberations at the conference, which I have just referred to, are not any exhaustive narration but only illustrative of the seriousness and wide range of business transacted at the conference so as to share the information with my brother judges and members of legal fraternity, jurists and scholars, in justification of need for participating into such deliberations at the international level. With the courtesy of Justice Vijender Jain and Mr. Parekh, I have received a set of three reports of the last three conferences. A glimpse into the volumes reveal that in all probability ILA is the only non-governmental organization, associated with law which works round the year in a methodical and systematic way. Research goes on incessantly and the results thereof provide valuable inputs, having their impact on international law and policies.

I am deeply impressed by the intensity and intellectual quality of the debates held and the resolutions passed at the conferences as also of the contents of the reports, made by various committees which are assigned the task of preparing such reports on almost all branches of law. Undoubtedly the legal fraternity is faced with current problems which may be called local but the philosophy of ILA rises above local considerations and shows the most mature responsibility in finding out solutions, advancing the international understanding without sacrificing the national interests.

Out of the several objectives of ILA, some are – the study, elucidation and advancement of international law, public and private, the study of comparative law, the making of proposals for the solution of conflict of laws and for the unification of laws. However, out of all the objects what has appealed to me the most is – the furthering of international understanding and goodwill. Today, what the world needs the most is this understanding and goodwill.

The emergence of a unipolar world has opened up new vistas in market economy which in common parlance is called 'globalisation'. The legal fraternity must keep pace with such advancements and evolve procedures and practices, capable of facing new challenges. In our context, we have to clearly understand that we cannot afford to lag behind if we wish to have our share which we deserve in international progress and prosperity. It will be a thinking in futility, if we claim such share in progress and prosperity without making any contribution and without playing our part and just by standing as mute spectators. Several subjects such as foreign investments, environmental disputes, terrorism, space laws and so on, will be the subject matter of settlements by international courts and tribunals, the decisions whereof shall be binding on the participating countries. The legal fraternity has, therefore, a very significant role to play in this context. We must be alive to our emerging responsibility.

I am indeed very happy to find myself having been associated with this event of the International Law Association. This event marks the width and vision of nobility of heart in the legal fraternity of Allahabad. I am reminded of a stanza from a beautiful poem written by Long Fellow. He has said—

Whenever a noble deed is wrought,  
Whenever is spoken a noble thought.  
Our hearts in glad surprise,  
To higher levels rise.  
Honour to those whose words and deeds,  
Thus help us in our daily needs.  
Any by their over flow,  
Raise us from what is low.

Without falling into the nicety of whether this function is an inauguration of a new chapter or just a 'reactivation' or 'rejuvenation', I wish the leaders and participants of this Chapter a very bright future, bustling with activities and the best of success in the times to come.



\* Inaugural Address delivered on the occasion of the Inauguration of Allahabad Chapter of International Law Association on 25th September, 2004, at Allahabad.