

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
AT THE CONVOCATION OF
THE NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY**

Cuttack: July 26, 2023

1. I am very happy to be here with the bright and energetic students of National Law University Odisha in this convocation.
2. I congratulate all the students who have been awarded their degrees today. I express my special appreciation for those students who have received medals. This convocation is also an occasion of happiness for the entire team of NLUO and the families of the students. I appreciate their contribution to the accomplishments of the students.

Dear students,

3. This convocation is an occasion to celebrate your achieving a major milestone in your life. Your degree opens new doors for you. It is also an occasion for you to make new resolutions to build a sound career and to fulfil the expectations of your family, society and the nation.
4. Let me emphasize the fact that all of you are gifted with equal talent and potential. Those of you who haven't received medals need not feel inadequate at all. Each one of you can create several opportunities and demonstrate your caliber in the future. I expect those of you who have been recognized today for your excellence to continue the good work with sustained commitment and sense of purpose.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. I have been told that NLUO has adopted some villages in nearby areas for transforming them into child friendly villages. Engagement of students with village communities will sensitize them to the ground realities faced by millions of Indians residing in villages. Inculcating social awareness and sensitivity among the students is part of their holistic education.

Dear students,

6. The motto of your university clearly describes the ideals to be followed by you as duty-conscious legal professionals. The motto 'Satye Sthito Dharmah' [सत्ये स्थितो धर्मः] means that Dharma is firmly rooted in Satya or Truth. I have observed that the motto of the Supreme Court of India states 'यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः' which means 'Victory is always on the side of Dharma'. The motto of a law university and that of the Supreme Court have a clear linkage because laws and legal studies are nothing but instruments of justice. In the Indian tradition, the word Dharma does not mean any specific religion or denomination. It means

the Supreme Law or the Universal Law that sustains or supports everything including the individual, society and nature.

In ancient India the two words frequently used to describe courts were 'Dharma-sabha' [धर्मसभा] and 'Dharmadhikarana' [धर्माधिकरण]. For today's modern India, our Dharma is contained in the Constitution of India, which is the supreme law of the land. The entire legal fraternity, including the young students passing out today, must abide by the Constitution as their sacred text.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. The reference of the Constitution reminds me of one of the greatest sons of India who was also among the chief architects of our Constitution. Babasahab Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was known for his brilliance in many fields including law. His central role in the drafting of our Constitution is well known. He overcame unimaginable difficulties to achieve world class excellence as an individual. He used his individual brilliance to promote the collective cause of serving the underprivileged. I am addressing you as the President of India because Dr. Ambedkar made it possible for someone like me to reach where I am today.

Dear students,

8. As you all know, India's freedom struggle was led by qualified lawyers. It shows that a large number of lawyers from those generations were fired with the spirit of sacrifice for the nation. In Odisha, it is but natural to remember Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das. He was a lawyer and was popularly referred to as Madhu-Barrister. His birth anniversary on 28th April, is celebrated as 'Lawyers Day' in Odisha. For the people of Odisha, 'Mahatma Gandhi' and 'Madhu-Barrister' are the two most respected icons of our freedom struggle. Great freedom fighters and lawyers like them also upheld the ideals of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in order to build a progressive and cohesive society. These ideals have been duly embedded in our Constitution.
9. You must remain steadfast in observing the Constitutional ideals. You should be sensitive to the priorities of the nation. You should also make conscious efforts to contribute to those national priorities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. Giving equal opportunity and respect to the vulnerable segments of our population, including women, should be the highest priority for every Indian who is in a position to help fellow citizens. I am happy to note that in today's convocation, girls have out-numbered boys in obtaining LL.M. and Ph.D. They have received nearly equal number of gold medals. I have been informed that the number of girls in LL.B. courses is also catching up with that of boys. The

journey of women lawyers, judges and jurists has been challenging, yet inspiring.

11. A very large number of our under-privileged and vulnerable fellow citizens don't even know about their rights and entitlements, nor do they have the means to move the courts to seek relief or justice.

Dear students,

12. It is your duty to dedicate some part of your professional time to serving the un-served or under-served. A lot of lawyers have been doing pro-bono work, community service and advocacy for the marginalized. Many of them have been very successful and some of them have become judges in the Supreme Court as a culmination of their illustrious legal career. Mahatma Gandhi had said, and I quote, "A true lawyer is one who places truth and service in the first place and the emoluments of the profession in the next place only". [Unquote]. Here I must correct a common mis-perception that Mahatma Gandhi was not a very successful lawyer. In fact, he had a flourishing legal practice and a very competent team of clerks and juniors in South Africa. He sacrificed money to fight for self-respect and national honour. I am not suggesting that you sacrifice the financial gains of your career. All I am appealing for is to devote at least a small part of your professional activities to helping the poor and the weak with a sense of genuine compassion. It is rightly said that law is not just a career, it is a calling.
13. India is moving ahead during the ongoing Amrit-Kaal with the vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047. As members of the legal fraternity, you all have to play your role as partners in the socio-economic progress of the country. I am sure that the developed India of 2047 will have many students from this university as legal luminaries and national leaders. With this great expectation, I wish all the young students a very bright future ahead.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!
Bande Utkala Janani!