



TAMIL NADU NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY
TIRUCHIRAPPALLI- 620 027

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

by

Hon'ble Tmt. Justice

VIJAYA KAMLESH TAHILRAMANI

Chancellor, TNNLU and Chief Justice, Madras High Court

FIRST CONVOCATION

16TH MARCH, 2019

Tamil Nadu National Law University, Tiruchirappalli

Convocation Ceremony

16th March, 2019

Convocation Address

My esteemed colleagues,

Dignitaries on and off the dais,

Prof. (Dr.) Kamala Sankaran, Vice Chancellor,
Tamil Nadu National Law University,

Members of the Academic, Executive & General Councils and
Finance Committee of Tamil Nadu National Law University,

Dr. S. Amirthalingam, Faculty-in-Charge, Examinations,

Faculty and Staff of Tamil Nadu National Law University,

My dear Law Students and their parents/family members,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a proud privilege to be amongst this august gathering for the Maiden Convocation of the Tamil Nadu National Law University, Tiruchirappalli.

The Tamil Nadu National Law University (for short, 'the University') was established by the Government of Tamil Nadu by Act 9 of 2012 with a view to provide quality legal education matching international standards. Being the brainchild of former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,

Late Dr. J. Jayalalithaa, the primary objectives of the University are –

- to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge of law, legal processes and their role in national development;
- to develop in the students and research scholars a sense of responsibility to serve society in the field of law by developing skills with regard to advocacy, legal services, legislation, law reforms and the like;
- to organize lectures, seminars, symposia and conferences to promote legal knowledge and to make law and legal processes as efficient instruments of social development;

The University started functioning from the Academic Year 2013-2014 offering two under-graduate programmes, i.e. B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) and B.Com. LL.B. (Hons.). It is located in a sprawling 25 acre campus away from the hustle and bustle of Trichy main town and has extensive infrastructural facilities, separate blocks for Administration, Academic activities, Examinations, Library and also separate Halls of Residence for Men and Women, Auditorium, Staff Quarters and Guest House.

Since its inception, the University is taking rapid strides as an educational institution, facilitating empowerment of its students in the legal field. Slowly but steadily, the University is earning a reputation as one among the best institutions in the country offering quality legal education. This is evident from the fact that within a short span of time of its functioning, the University has been included by the University Grants Commission in its approved list of Universities under Section 12(B) of the UGC Act, 1956, which enables the University to apply for grants from the UGC and other Central Government Funding Agencies. More importantly, the University has been granted recognition by the Bar Council of India as a Center for Legal Education. The University is a member of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU). It is also a member of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute and a permanent member of the Indian Academy of Social Sciences. The University is an Empanelled Institution with the Competition Commission of India, New Delhi.

Education is the source of empowerment for any nation, for it builds the strength of an individual's character, which in turn helps that individual to cope up with the ups and downs of life. It is only education that transforms a human being into a wholesome noble soul, who is an asset to the society. Quality education enhances the dignity of human beings and increases their self-respect. A good educational system remains an indispensable tool for the overall economic growth of a country, especially for a developing one as ours.

In its real sense, education is nothing but the pursuit of knowledge. It is an endless journey through truth and enlightenment – a journey that opens up new vistas of development of humanism, where there is neither scope nor room for pettiness, disharmony, jealousy, hatred or enmity. Rightly so, the founder of Sikh Religion, Shri. Guru Nanak Devji emphasized the importance of education or knowledge in the following words :-

“Knowledge is strength;

Knowledge leads to wisdom and insight;

Knowledge elevates body, mind and soul; and

Knowledge is virtue.”

Of late, there has been a general realization that rote learning is not going to help students much. Although there is multi-fold increase in degree holders today, in practicality, it is just adds numbers. The sad reality of our educational system is that it churns out graduates, but does very little to equip them to stand out in today's cut-throat competition. In my view, education must be career or job-oriented, and facilitate students to equip and empower themselves, to make a mark of their own in their chosen fields of specialization.

Besides Medicine and Engineering, Legal profession is the most sought after by students, who see the expanding horizons of law and the potentiality it holds to find success in different forms, be it court practice, corporate work, judiciary, teaching or the like. Armed with a Law Degree, you now have choices galore on which path to tread and make a career.

It is common knowledge that law schools, especially ones at the national level such as yours, serve a very important purpose of bringing together individuals from different geographic locations (sometimes even from outside our territorial borders) with diverse backgrounds and varied socio-economic segments of our society under one roof, with the sole objective of learning law, to become part of the judicial fraternity and to serve the society. Here, they learn from one another, as much as they do from the system.

Convocation is a special occasion and marks an important stage in the life of a student. It is the culmination of the hard work and effort put in by the students over the last few years. In that sense, this is a memorable day and an unforgettable event to cherish throughout their lives. I myself vividly recollect the day when I was conferred with the Law Degree. For most of you, the occasion may bring mixed feelings – a tinge of sadness that the golden phase of college life is coming to an end and at the same time, a sense of hope, coupled with excitement, for what the future beholds!

My heartiest congratulations to all graduating students, with special compliments to those who have come out with flying colours. And those who have not achieved distinction need not despair, for I would like to remind them of the words of Arnold Toynbee that there are *"Slow growers, who blossom late in life"*. Remember, *"Life's battles do not always go to the strongest or the fastest man; soon or late, the man who wins is the man who thinks he can"*. They would do well to remind themselves that they will get their due in future, in some form and on some other occasion, provided they put in the hard work.

On this special occasion, I would like to remind you students about the contribution of your parents in what you have achieved today. They are the most important people in your lives who have made this day possible for you. They have contributed their might financially, physically as well as mentally. They have toiled as much as you have. They have sacrificed as much as you did. They have worried or exulted as much as you had. However, there is difference between your efforts and theirs. Your efforts were selfish, in that they

were aimed at your own success and at what you aspire to do with your careers and lives. But those of your parents were unselfish, as all of it revolved solely around your success. I am sure the parents present here are equally or even more joyous and are as excited as their wards on this memorable occasion.

This ceremony is also much about some of those unsung heroes who have played a significant part in your success – your Teachers. Their contribution in making what you are, and what you would be in future, is immense. It is teachers who help shape up our personalities and intellect, fine-tune our skills and guide us towards academic success, just like a sculptor chisels his work of art. Convocation is one more feather in the illustrious caps of teachers.

Speaking about the role of parents and teachers in shaping up students and their careers, I would like to recollect a famous Sanskrit saying which goes like this –

“A disciple attains prominence by carrying out the orders of his preceptors, given with the intention of illuminating his intellect, however harsh they might be. Even though a gem found in a mine might be precious, it needs to undergo the rigors of a grindstone, before it adorns the crown of monarchs.”

The simile used here is that of an uncut diamond which has to undergo the grinds of polish before it adorns the Crowns of monarchs. The message drives home the importance of disciplining students at a young age, as it is for their benefit that they have to be chastised, whenever necessary, and that would ultimately stand them in good stead.

As far as legal education is concerned, one positive feature that has emerged is the steady increase in girl students. Today, there is significant percentage of female students seeking legal education and this has resulted in more women entering legal profession, judiciary and teaching. The results are evident, in that there are 3 women Judges in the Supreme Court of India; 2 women Chief Justices of High Courts and 73 women Judges out of 670 Judges serving various High Courts in the country. In Madras High Court alone, there are 10 women Judges as on date.

As a woman myself, I cannot be more joyous and proud to see all the female students graduating today. Many of you will soon step into our court halls, while some of you may enter judicial service, yet while some of you may take up

higher studies in order to equip yourselves more before taking a plunge in the profession. I only wish to see more and more women take up law not just as a profession, but also as a service and career-oriented avenue.

All of you need to bear in mind that there is an objective in life beyond making a career, earning money or garnering fame and reputation. Each one of you needs to introspect – how can you contribute to the society, and how can you become responsible citizens? You have to think beyond your needs and your personal entitlements. In the hustle and bustle of life, in your pursuit of personal goals, do not dwell on asserting your rights alone, but also try to fulfil the concomitant duties. You have a debt to repay* to your parents and the society in general.

What type of imprint you would like to leave is the critical question. The Father of Dynamite, Alfred Nobel, one day, while reading the newspaper, was shocked to read his own Obituary in the Obituary Column, which read 'The seller of death died'. Though he was annoyed initially, but on a lateral thinking, he found out that his inventions have not

been constructively used by the society, but used only to destroy mankind and thus, he felt those remarks were justified, which of course were published by mistake. But that mistake helped him awaken himself to the real needs of the society, which always wants peace and justice. After understanding this, Alfred Nobel worked hard and established the Scheme for Nobel Prize for Peace, which is awarded for those who contribute for the establishment of Global Peace. This episode speaks volumes about the duty and responsibility in each one of us to establish peace, justice and order in the world.

In our society, there is very little awareness about the rights guaranteed to the citizens by our Constitution and the laws, or the corresponding duties expected of them. I think law students and young lawyers should serve as agents of social change by helping to spread awareness amongst disadvantaged groups, thus facilitating access to justice and uplifting the underprivileged as well as the downtrodden to the mainstream of the society. As Mahatma Gandhi said, endeavour to be the change you want to see.

I thank the Tamil Nadu National Law University for giving me this wonderful opportunity to share my thoughts with these budding lawyers and law students. I once again congratulate the graduating students and wish them all success in life.

Nandri, Vanakkam.
