

**FULL TEXT OF THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION ADDRESS BY
HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA SHRI JUSTICE N V RAMANA**

NALSAR, HYDEERABAD

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I am delighted to join all of you here for this eighteenth annual Convocation being held in Hyderabad. I see parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, all look happier today than the graduates themselves. It is indeed a special occasion for all of them. You graduates represent their scarifies, their aspirations and their hope. At the outset I congratulate all the students graduating today and also welcome them to a challenging and incredibly satisfying profession.

Today is a proud occasion for this University and its faculty. Students of NALSAR are reaching far and wide, bringing laurels to the University. NALSAR is now known for its research centres and academic rigors which has produced many bright lawyers and academicians. Prof. Faizan Mustafa, your beloved Vice Chancellor is carrying forward the rich legacy of this University. You are lucky to have him as your Vice Chancellor.

You will be surprised to know, that this huge university started functioning from a small bungalow in Barkatpura. I was part of a collective endeavour to set up a world class law university in Hyderabad along the lines of National Law School Bangalore.

Things quickly fell in place. With backing of the statute, this robust institution took shape with active support of the then government.

My association continued thereafter with this university as a member of the Governing Body and as a Chancellor for a brief while. This association with NALSAR is very close to my heart.

Young friends, in the last five years, I am sure you must have heard hundreds of lectures. I know that you are certainly not looking forward to yet another lengthy lecture.

Aristotle once said, I quote:

“The best laws, though sanctioned by every citizen of the state, will be of no avail unless the young are trained by habit and education, in the spirit of the constitution”.

Our Constitution was framed as a radical document which bridged the gap between the aspirations of the past and expectations of the future. But it shall thrive only when the young citizens honour its principles with conviction. Ethos of the democratic republic of India is based on the people’s commitment to the welfarist constitution of India.

This commitment must be nurtured at an early age by creating social consciousness and inculcating a culture of lawfulness. The educational institutions of our country such as yours, play a pivotal rule in fostering the spirit of the Constitution.

Eminent jurist Justice M.C. Chagla, in his Autobiography – *Roses in December*, highlighted the importance and need of Law as follows:

“Law is a great discipline for the mind. It teaches you how to think clearly, precisely, and accurately. Every word has its definite meaning and must find its

proper place in its own context. Verbosity and diffuseness are foreign to a well-trained legal mind.”

A mark of great lawyer is clarity of thoughts, command over the language and skills to communicate. Unless one is proficient in the language, be it his mother tongue or any other language, he or she cannot communicate their point of view effectively. It's a field where one measures every word. Whether you are a lawyer, judge or policy maker, you must always be aware about the consequences and possible interpretations of the words and phrases.

Like renowned jurist John Rawls once said “*Legal philosophers are political philosophers with a specialization that gives language a special importance*”.

I would like to state here, particularly in legal profession, the learning does not stop at the university, rather it begins after it. In fact, the learning in law is unending. It is interdisciplinary and inter-sectional. Law as an instrument is deeply embedded and derived out of our social realities.

The future of law, is often dependent upon our understanding of past and the present. Therefore, a successful practitioner of law must also be well versed with literature, philosophy, history, economics and politics of the land.

After all, the aim of law is to unravel the truth and to do justice. There is nothing more difficult in the world than to discover the truth. Because it cannot be discovered by merely looking at one dimension. It has many facets. It requires trained minds to analyze all aspects of it and reach a logical conclusion. The greatness of a lawyer or judge lies in their ability to discover the ultimate truth, and thus secure justice accordingly.

A great university is where mind is freed from the notions of the past and the illusions of the present. My dear friends, your specialized and esteemed education puts you on a different pedestal.

March forward in your own quest of truth in this world of illusions. It also means not accepting anything on the face value irrespective of where it comes from. Yes, answers may be difficult to come by, but do not stop questioning.

As I had highlighted in an earlier occasion, especially students cannot afford to be disillusioned. It is imperative for you to be a part of current debates. Do not stop at just raising questions. Also ask yourself what the remedy can be. Being the future of the nation, you must have a clear vision.

Being the guardians of freedom, justice, equality and ethics, you cannot allow narrow and partisan views to dominate the nation's thought. Students are known for their readiness to fight for all the right causes because their thoughts are pure and honest. They should be in the forefront to question injustice. We need leaders for tomorrow to rise from these grounds.

Much water has flowed in rivers Krishna and Godavari since my graduation four decades ago. We have seen unthinkable advances in every sphere of our lives and learning. Unfortunately, new vices have also made their way into the lives of youth.

I am alarmed at the reports of increased number of youth falling prey to intoxicants. I would urge the youth of today, to disassociate themselves from substance abuse. Your

mental and physical health is in your hands. A vibrant nation is built upon the health and energy of its youth.

I observe that graduating students are accustomed to only considering legal problems in a theoretical manner. There is an urgent need to introduce courses which are more practical and allow students to interact with people and their issues at the grassroot level. That brings me to one of the disappointing outcomes I have found in present day legal education. I find that very few students who graduate from National Law Schools are interested in joining litigation or taking up public causes, let alone practice at the district level.

Further, it seems that there is a fascination to only practice before the Supreme Court and High Court while completely ignoring the importance of trial courts. To succeed at trial advocacy, one requires a separate skill-set, wherein the requirement of presence of mind and intellectual inputs is immense. Moreover, considering the highest pendency before the trial courts, there is both a demand and the need for specialized lawyers. I urge you all to consider gaining experience at trial court level before moving on to practice at higher forums such as High Courts and the Supreme Court.

My personal journey started with my appearance before a tehsildar in tenancy matter. Ever since then, I have appeared before tax authorities, stamp registrar, magistrate court, munsif court, etc. I still remember my first assignment as a judge appointed commissioner. I was paid a princely sum of 100 rupees for that assignment as Commissioner. I must say, the experiences I gathered from these endeavors shaped my understanding of the system and the people.

No university can teach you this. You must understand that there is no substitute for direct experience.

Age is on your side. Build your career on strong foundation. That strong foundation is based on practical realization. It is only when you work at the grassroot level, you understand the rigors of law on common man.

But, let me caution you, the path will not be filled with roses. The courtrooms are nothing like ones you see in a movie or a moot court hall. It will be cramped, dingy and the judge may not even have a fan.

You might feel like an alien in this system. I know it is not easy, but I want all of you to remember that determination and persistence are the two mantras for success. The world may try to throw various challenges at you. But you are equipped to fight the hardest of battles.

Here, I am reminded of a half-a-century old story by famous Telugu author, Sri Rachakonda Viswanth Sastry, popularly known as 'raavi sastry'. Every bit of it is still relevant. Here I quote from "Maya" one of his 'aaru saara kathalu':

"One of the junior lawyers, Murthy received his law degree. He stood in front of the senior lawyer with humility.

The senior lawyer told Murthy to remember one important thing. The Senior said "*The early bird catches the worm, said the Englishman. Englishmen are very wise. He never does anything unless there is something in it for him. That is why you should reach the Court very early and get the gates opened. And in the evening, wait until the Court gates are closed. Always be alert and make sure that you are present in the court each and every day. The way the cranes stand on the shores and foxes hang around the graveyards. Of course, this kind of*

comparison is not very pleasant, but this is what we must do. If you want to shine, you must always be in the Court. You know what the Court is. It is like a dense forest. Hyenas mimic human laughter in the forest. If you go closer thinking there is another human, the hyena will eat you. We lawyers need to attract the clients that come to Court in this manner.

Do not be shocked. It is the fault of the person who enters the forest, not ours. But there are bigger animals than hyenas. If we are not careful, then those animals will eat us.

The English man had drafted the law in accordance with the principles of this stupid world. Never forget that he, the English man, handed down all these things to us – these courts, the law books, the law degrees, and the witness procedures.”

After all, practising law still remains one of the most demanding professions. To sustain through these ordeals, you shall need extraordinary will, passion and commitment to the cause. I am of the firm belief that success will come to those who have faith in themselves. You must enter the profession with the zeal of a champion of justice. At times you may feel that your work is pretty ordinary. You may feel that your talents are not being properly used. You may see many undeserving people flourish in the profession.

But opportunity comes to everyone, and when the opportunity knocks, be ready. You must put into practice all that you have learnt here. I assure you there is no success like the success in the profession of law. There is no satisfaction like the satisfaction in bringing justice to those in need. Remember, you are entering one of the most independent professions. Be fearless and Be upright. Stand by constitutional oath taken by you.

Here, I have something to share with the parents and teachers. At times, we try to manifest our unfulfilled dreams upon our children. By doing so, we may end up stifling a great artist, a budding intellectual or a fearless leader from being born. I request all the parents and the teachers present here, to encourage innovation, passion and give the children freedom to pursue their own dreams.

Brother Satish Chandra Sharma, Chancellor of this University is a dynamic person who is enthusiastic of making NALSAR reach greater heights. I am assured that the University is in safe hands under his able guidance.

Prof. Faizan Mustafa is an energetic leader who has continued the legacy of this University and has ensured the continuation of good reputation this University has across the globe. He is one of the acclaimed academicians with a scholarly bent of mind. He is the best Ambassador for legal awareness. He is chosen by the Government to be a Member on the panel created for spreading awareness about the Constitution. He is making best use of social media platforms to spread awareness about the Constitution. I complement him for the good work he is doing.

The bounden duty of NALSAR University of Law does not end with producing extremely competent and skilful graduates. It owes the responsibility to produce honest women and men who can be trusted in public and private life. My beloved students, it is imperative for you to realize that legal education is not just tool of mere professional success.

I wish all of you a life of success and fulfilment.

Thank you.