



Address of

Mr. Justice Arun Mishra

**Hon'ble Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission**

On

Human Rights Day

10th December 2023

At

**Bharat Mandapam
Pragati Maidan, New Delhi**

**Address of Mr. Justice Arun Mishra, Hon'ble
Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission
On Human Rights Day, 10th December 2023**

Hon'ble Vice President of India,

Esteemed Members of the Commission,

Present and former Judges of the Supreme Court,

Judges of the High Court of Delhi,

Chairpersons and Members of Tribunals, National
Commissions and State Commissions,

Officers of the Central and State Governments,

Office Bearer and Representatives of the UN
Organizations, Diplomats,

Ld. Members of the Bar,

Media Persons,

Civil Society Members,

Distinguished Invitees, Dear Students, Ladies and
Gentlemen.

Today, we have assembled here to celebrate the 75th Human Rights Day. It is Amrit Kaal of our independence and signifies 30 years journey of NHRC. I welcome and congratulate all.

Hon'ble Vice President Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar is a jurist who has always fought for the rights of the people. He always stood against injustice and is committed to the basic values of our cultural ethos. He has been a source of strength to all of us.

Human Rights Day is a reminder of equality, justice, freedom, and respect for human rights.

NHRC is committed to protecting and promoting the human rights of people in India.

Vedas, Upanishads, and various Dharma Shastras resonate with principles that align with the essence of human rights, respect for individuals' intrinsic worth, and the need for ethical conduct in society.

Our cultural ethos and values are reflected in our Constitution—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains ideals that conform to our values. Indian culture is for standing on the side of justice.

The Gurukul system, depicted in texts like the Mahabharata, underscores the importance of education, emphasising the right to access knowledge.

History shows that India has always been rich and diverse in cultures, religions, and traditions. We believe in non-violence as violence and human rights are opposite.

अहिंसा परमो धर्मः धर्म हिंसा तथैव च ।

Means- Non-violence is the highest virtue; violence is the worst sin.

Gautam Buddha and Mahaveer Swami represented the essence of our values: even today, their message of non-violence and peace resonates in the human rights discourse.

Both governmental and individual responsibilities are integral to creating a just and equitable society where human rights are valued, protected, and upheld for every individual.

यत्रा धर्मः तत्रा जयः, यत्रा अधर्मः तत्रा दुःखम् ।

तत्रा सत्यस्य यत्रास्ति, तत्रा सर्वे सुखी भवन्तु ।।

(Where there is righteousness, there is victory, and where there is iniquity, there is suffering. Wherever there is truth, let all be happy)

The ethical ramifications of advancing technologies are a matter of grave concern. Challenges of modern technology weave through the fabric of contemporary society. Dramatic rises in inequality and the triple planetary crisis, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution require immediate attention.

New digital technologies have transformed the way people live. Also, help drive progress for all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Internet is useful but also has a dark side, infringing on privacy through the spread of hate speech misinformation, undermining democratic processes, and increasing online violence against women and children. When improperly or maliciously used, it can fuel divisions within and between communities to undermine human rights.

Business enterprises are a major source of investment, innovation, and development and can be a significant driver in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, businesses must effectively address human rights concerns.

Institutions of local self-governance, Municipal and Panchayat bodies play a crucial role in advancing

human rights and promoting the concept of ‘fraternity,’ improving the quality of life by ensuring clean water supply, water, sanitation, and public health, and ensuring equality for citizens. These institutions are indispensable in implementing constitutional values “Swaraj” on the ground. The Municipal bodies and Panchayats must effectively and transparently discharge their statutory civic functions enjoined upon them.

The persistent problems of food insecurity, mental health stigma, and displacement due to various factors further underscore the intricate web of human rights challenges.

The people have to be at the centre of all our development efforts, which is human-centric. We must not leave anyone behind. We must support the vulnerable by affirmative action.

Women and children must be kept at the centre of achieving sustainable development goals. Human rights can only be fully upheld if all women and children feel safe and secure and have improved quality of life. They will enjoy their rights when these goals are achieved.

In an inter-dependent world, the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only disrupted the world economy and livelihood but took away millions of lives, has shown that there is a need for transparency in information sharing and collaboration to focus on building resilient framework, which will serve not only present but future generations and holistic well-being of the entire Humanity.

India has provided COVID-19 test kits and other equipment and ensured COVID-19 vaccines to over 100 countries when other countries could not render help. Simultaneously, it administered more than two billion doses to people in the country in less than eight months. India also developed a digital framework for hospital management and administering vaccines, which we shared with the rest of the world. During such a devastating pandemic, when people could not go to work, India started providing food grains to 800 million people, which reflects concern for human rights.

We faced problems of spurious drugs, medicines, and food adulteration, which must be dealt with stringently and expeditiously. Another issue faced by the young generation is drug addiction, which is a matter of

grave concern. The young generation has become vulnerable. They have to live with the consequences. Our responsibility is to act decisively, not to contain but to eliminate the availability and use of drugs.

Terrorism causes grave violations of the human rights of citizens. In the whole world, it has been seen that innocent people suffer. Condoning or sympathising with terror activities and terrorists is a great disservice to the cause of human rights. We must not glorify or sympathise with them.

NHRC India recently hosted the 28th Conference of Asia Pacific Countries. It brought out the 'Delhi Declaration' unanimously, incorporating Indian ethos. NHRC recognises the crucial role played by human rights defenders, and a Core Group has also been formed. NHRC regularly interact with civil society representatives and human rights defenders on various issues.

I want to highlight here that the National Human Rights Commission works in partnership with various stakeholders. In a democracy, the government ensures individuals' rights and provides basic amenities for improved quality of life.

NHRC has Net Portal to lodge and track online complaints, the progress and outcomes of complaints. Anyone from anywhere may submit a complaint on behalf of victims in any language. There is no requirement for an affidavit or an advocate; complaints are dealt with expeditiously. Commission believes in reaching out to people, organising open hearings/camp sittings, and meeting with the press in different parts of the country.

NHRC has a proactive approach to solving cases related to human rights violations. As to issues of critical importance, the Commission takes systemic measures, organises open house discussions, and holds seminars and meetings of core groups with different stakeholders. Based on the same, Advisories are finalised and issued with actionable points exercising the powers under Sec.12 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

In the recent past, the NHRC issued advisories, including the Advisory on Mental Health, Rights of Truck Drivers, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, the Welfare of Transgender Persons, to mitigate Deliberate self-harm and suicide attempts by prisoners; Child Sexual abuse Material; and to

Prevent, Minimise, and Mitigate Ocular Trauma, amongst others.

Let me flag a few burning issues with huge ramifications on human rights on a vast scale.

Firstly, poverty impedes people from thoroughly enjoying their human rights. Ensuring housing, clean tap water, toilets, electricity, cooking gas, and access to healthcare and banking services ensures human rights and dignity to individuals, emphasising that no one is left out, the Commission issues direction. Digital governance has resulted in rooting out corruption. The war against poverty must not only be continued but also accelerated so that the people of this country have an improved quality of life and live with dignity.

Secondly, climate change - Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like prolonged droughts, high-intensity rainfalls, cyclones, and floods pose enormous challenges. It affects human rights, as it causes loss of lives and livelihoods, displaces communities, disrupts access to resources, and increases conflicts over scarce resources.

Climate-induced crisis is a global issue. The developed countries have contributed substantially to creating this crisis. Poor are the worst affected. Thus, it is the duty of the rich to contribute to mitigating the crisis. When the poor consume electricity, it brings light to their homes so children can read and write.

Thirdly, harmonising human rights in business. With expanded economic activities, high economic growth, and rising prosperity, India is also developing into a major manufacturing hub. It is, therefore, essential to harmonise human rights and climate issues in business.

Fourthly, women's empowerment in the workplace is a critical aspect of fostering gender equality. Ensuring workplace security is essential to creating an environment of dignity where women can thrive professionally without facing discrimination, harassment, or unsafe conditions. Many of our daughters are going to workplaces to master professionally. It becomes much easier if there are two earning members in each family instead of just one.

Fifthly, cyberspace must be safe and secure. Cyber crimes infringe on the very right to life and

dignity, violate human rights in several ways, and National security compromised. Digital forensic and regulatory regimes must keep pace with technological advancement. International cooperation is required to keep cross-border cyberspace beneficial to Humanity, considering 96% is the dark web. Similarly, we have to care for AI and deep fake.

Lastly, I would like to mention that vulnerable groups, including transgender, Persons with Mental Illnesses, sex workers, beggars, destitute, elderly, orphaned children, and persons in need., must be strengthened and empowered. Their human rights violations must be addressed on priority, with sensitivity to their plight. We must do everything in our capacity and beyond to make their lives more meaningful and dignified.

Our Strength is unity in diversity, embracing “Manav Dharma,” i.e. Humanity is our religion. Mahopanishad propounded that the highest attainment for humans is “VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM”, i.e. “One Earth, One Family, One Future” has never held more resonance. This statement is not just a call for unity; it’s an affirmation of our shared destiny and mutual responsibility as inhabitants of a single planet.

Our scripture records “Surve Bhavantu Sukhinah”, meaning let the entire world be happy, which is part of our cultural ethos and philosophical thinking. The theory of karma for the enjoyment of rights finds a place in Art—51A of our Constitution. Let us vow to work together to fulfil the aims.

In an age marked by rapid technological advances, globalisation, and an increasingly interwoven socio-cultural fabric. May our shared commitment propel us toward a tomorrow where the inherent dignity and rights of every person are acknowledged and protected by all.



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भवन्तु सुखिनः

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