

**INAUGURATION OF  
LEGAL AID CLINIC FOR WOMEN – PUDUCHERRY**

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY  
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SATISH K. AGNIHOTRI  
ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE**

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Esteemed distinguished Honourable Judges Mr. Justice K.K. Sasidharan and Mr. Justice C.S. Karnan – I am told that Mr. Justice Sasidharan is son of the soil and Justice C.S. Karnan is the son in law of the soil; I am son of Indian soil,

Malai Vanakkam,

Chief Judge, Puducherry, Judicial Officers, Dr. Arul, Member Secretary, Duty Counsel, all advocates, legal aid functionaries, media, ladies and gentlemen,

I was expecting that all revenue and other officers, who are dealing with day to day life of the public, be invited and be requested to be present here. Legal aid is not a programme of judiciary alone. Legal aid is a programme of one and all for the development of the society.

My Brother Mr. Justice Karnan has given a detailed sketch of the development of the legal aid in the Union Territory of Puducherry and I am sure it will take its lead as it has been doing. Brothers Mr. Justice Karnan and Mr.

Justice Sasidharan laid the emphasis on legal aid to women as they are the backbone of the society. It is true. Why this legal aid clinic exclusively for women is being inaugurated today? This is the purpose. No one person can claim or achieve anything without the support of the backbone of the family i.e. women. That is why we decided to have a legal aid clinic exclusively for women. The Executive Chairman of the Puducherry Legal Services Authority, on account of some problems, could not come. However, he has sent his message which Dr. Arul will deliver after this.

My request to all of you is this. From time immemorial, the emphasis was on compromise, on mediation, lok adalat and conciliation. Recently, in the past, instead of resolving our disputes ourselves, we have taken recourse to litigation. Court oriented litigation for small things – we take recourse to courts and then we try to achieve something which may not have long effect. Because once you start litigation, then there is no end to it. You keep on agitating at every level and go up to the highest level and thereafter, with a heavy heart, it is settled.

I attended in the morning one very important function where three eminent legal jurists were honoured with life time achievement award. This question was raised and it was pointed out that even way-back in 1907, Abraham Lincon – a known administrator; reformer, while addressing advocates gathered, pointed out that it is said that advocates are not honest. It is not correct. They are honest. But they must attend and encourage people to go

for compromise. You all know very well. In the Indian History, lawyers were national leaders. May be Mahatma Gandhi may be other national leaders, all were influential lawyers. I am told, Your Honourable Chief Minister is also a lawyer. Lawyer has a great responsibility not merely to take cases to the Courts but by resolving the disputes outside the Court. This is the purpose of legal aid.

Legal Aid Clinic for Women is not only to resolve their *inter se* disputes with family members. If there is any other dispute, may be problems on achieving their rights. You do not know what are your rights. Please go to this clinic. The duty counsel and other counsel will be there to assist you, to inform you about your rights and to help you how to achieve, what are your entitlements.

Now there is a concept of Village Care and Support Centre. I am informed that there are 500 Villages in the Union Territory of Pondicherry. At present, hardly 37 Village Centres are there. We have decided to open Village Centres in each and every village - I must make it clear again - not for the purpose of resolution of court oriented disputes but for the purpose of implementation of various schemes and to enable them to have fruits of your rights. This is the purpose.

This is a small Union Territory but having a synthesis of two or three cultures. French culture is here. Indian culture. Hindu culture is here. Tamil

culture is here. Take advantage of good traditional things of different cultures. Please use it for the purpose of having a decent social life.

I will request the Chairman of the Legal Services Authority to put up on the Notice Board in all Village Centres, all the schemes of the Central Government, if any, and of State Government, wherever you are entitled to have benefits. I tell you for example. Right to Education. There are several people working as labourers not having enough means to make both ends meet. They cannot send their children to school. They can send their children to the school without any cost. Now Right to Education is your fundamental right. If you have any difficulty, go to this Village Care and Support Centre/Legal Aid Clinic, they will help you how you can get it or how you can send your children to school. If you cannot get education, you can approach the Court for this. It is your fundamental right. Right to health. It may not be your fundamental right but your legal right. There are various schemes. Legal Aid people will tell you how to get the best health care. Old Age Pension. People may not be getting full benefit. For that, go to these places, they will help you. This is legal awakening movement. Legal awakening means, you must know your rights you must have full benefits of your rights.

Constitution has provided welfare Governments and if there is no scheme or anything, you can find a way out. These people, advocates panel lawyers duty counsel, they will help you. This is the purpose. Fortunately, this territory

does not have much cases but even this number can be reduced by resorting to these alternative methods, as I told you, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, lok adalat. In all these, you will have win-win situation. Nothing to lose. Only it is a sort of give and take like a friend. If you have two chapathis and two persons are there, you can share it. This type of situation can be created. Best concept of mediation. It is said, take a ripe mango. Two persons are fighting for a ripe mango. One needs kernel of the mango for different purpose. Other one needs its pulp. Divide it. The person who needs the kernel will get it and the person who needs pulp he will also get it. Both will be satisfied. Otherwise, if you are fighting, for the whole mango, one will get it and the other will not get. This is the message. My message to all of you is this, please take recourse to traditional method of dispute resolution.

This problem I always see. The organisers do not arrange sufficient seating place for people to come and sit. So many people are waiting outside. Again this is the problem. But I expect in future, this problem will not occur. Every one must be treated with dignity. They must be given chair to sit and not to stand.

My brothers Mr. Justice Sasidharan and Mr. Justice Karnan, they are the members of the Committee. They have responsibility to see that this message of the mission reaches to each and every person. I am sure they will take it up to new heights. They will go to all places every where and see that the people of

this Union Territory are not deprived of information of their rights and benefit of their rights.

With this, I compliment all of you. Nandri Vanakkam.

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