

THE CLOCK IS MISSING, MY LORD!

The Supreme Court of India unveiled a new statue of the Lady of Justice. The statue's blindfold has been removed, and it now holds a copy of the Constitution instead of a sword. This change has been made as per the suggestion of our Chief Justice DY Chandrachud. We are told that this is supposed to be a shift away from colonial legacies. If that is the idea, then moving away from that colonial dress code where our legal professionals look more like penguins in the hot summer sun would have been welcome. Colourful smart ethnic wear in the courts would have made the proceedings attractive. Also the 6 week summer vacation should have been done away with it which is a legacy of our English rulers, who hailing from the British Isles of rainy skies and gales devised it for their own comfort unable to withstand the hot tropical sun. Whereas we are brown skinned Indians. And who has heard of a 6 weeks holiday in the workplace. Are you school kids or what?

The change in the statue also emphasizes that justice in India is based on constitutional values rather than authority. The Lady now has her eyes wide open, signifying that the law is not blind. The traditional sword has been replaced with a copy of the Indian Constitution implying that justice should be administered according to constitutional principles. The Chief Justice stated, "The law is not blind; it sees everyone equally," highlighting the importance of equality before the law. The statue retains the scales of justice in her right hand, symbolizing impartiality in judicial decisions.

All very well, my Lord! A very admirable and welcome change. But the change that would have really made this pretty picture complete is that of a clock dangling from the neck of the Lady – you know a

kind of necklace. Ladies love to wear necklaces you see. And what better pendant than a clock for the necklace of the Lady of Justice? Law not being blind and having a strong eyesight and guided by the holy book of the Constitution and not retribution – all these are meaningless if the seekers of justice have to fight their cases for years, for decades, for whole lifetimes and sometimes for generations!

According to the National Judicial Data Grid, the number of cases pending in the Supreme Court is 80221; for the High Courts the figure is 58 lakhs and for the District Courts it's a staggering 4.5 crores!! And God knows for how many years these cases are pending. So adding a clock to the attire of the Lady would have displayed some level of sensitiveness to the wretched plight of the petitioners. If the maxim "Justice Delayed is Justice Denied" is true, then we cannot deny that delay in delivering justice is the bane of the Indian judiciary. More than Justice the courts in India have come to symbolize a filmy dialogue "Tareekh pe Tareekh". Hearing after hearing and the lawyers getting richer and richer.

Here, I have a suggestion for judicial reform. Restrict the number of hearings to just three at each level of the Court and that too the maximum time frame being one year. With the strict stipulation that final verdict has to be delivered on the third hearing. Thereafter, the case can go to the higher court. Otherwise, we would have this endless rigmarole of Tareekh pe Tareekh. So a clock on the Lady was what was badly required My Lord. Pity that you missed it!