

PRESS NOTE

The Judicial Academy, Jharkhand successfully conducted a **State Level Conference on “Judicial Ethics: Conduct Inside and Outside of Court”** on 20th July, 2024 at Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Auditorium. **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Abhay S. Oka, Judge, Supreme Court of India**, graced the event as the chief guest, while **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sujit Narayan Prasad, Acting Chief Justice, High Court of Jharkhand-cum-Executive Chairman, JHALSA, Ranchi** attended as the Guest of Honour.

The conference commenced with a warm welcome address by **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rongon Mukhopadhyay, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand-cum-Judge-In-charge, Judicial Academy Jharkhand**. He welcomed Justice Oka for gracing the event with his eminent personality. Justice Mukhopadhyay said in his speech: *“This gathering marks a significant milestone in our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of judicial integrity and excellence.”*

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sujit Narayan Prasad, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand & Executive Chairman, JHALSA, Ranchi delivered a thought-provoking introductory address, highlighting the importance of ethical conduct in the legal profession. In his speech Justice Prasad said that: *“As a judge, I recognize the significance of this conference in promoting the highest standards of judicial ethics, integrity, and accountability.”* Drawing from Sukra Neeti, he highlighted five essential virtues that judges must uphold to ensure impartiality: resisting bias, greed, fear, ill-will, and secret hearings. Justice Prasad stressed the importance of punctuality, probity, integrity, and impartiality in a judge's profession, advocating for a hermit-like detachment from desires and aspirations. He emphasized the need for judicial officers to be incorruptible and honest, seizing this conference as an opportunity to share ideas and gain valuable insights into judicial ethics from diverse perspectives.

The Chief Guest, **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Oka** then delivered an inaugural address. He humbly clarified that: *“I am not here to give lecture or teach you in traditional sense. But as a member of the legal fraternity I will share my ideas and experience... I will not tell you to do something I have never done.”*

He acknowledged that the judiciary has made two mistakes in the last 75 years: Firstly, neglecting trial and appellate courts and called them lower court or subordinate courts. Secondly, the judiciary patted their shoulder assuming public trust without effort.

He emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in our mindset, recognizing that the trial courts are the backbone of our judicial system. The outcome of cases and the fate of litigants are determined in these courts. Encouraging younger judges, he urged them to remain unfazed by the presence of higher courts, instead focusing on the significant responsibility they bear in shaping the lives of ordinary people. With improved working conditions, judicial officers are expected to deliver high-quality judgments. As the face of the judiciary, they must uphold the institution's image, which is more crucial than the prestige of higher courts.

He then elaborated on the essential conduct and behaviour expected of judges both inside and outside the courtroom.

Regarding conduct outside the courtroom, he stressed that a judge's public behaviour significantly influences the respect they receive from the community. A judge's demeanour in public should be even more dignified and exemplary than that of an ordinary citizen. Furthermore, he advised judges to ensure their children are raised with a sense of normalcy, without the burden of privilege or entitlement that comes with being a judge's child, allowing them to grow and develop in a healthy and grounded way.

Regarding conduct inside the courtroom, he stressed the importance of punctuality and dais discipline as essential qualities for judges. He advised judges to arrive at least half an hour before court sessions and maintain a neat and dignified appearance. He provided guidance on courtroom etiquette, emphasizing the need to refrain from using mobile phones, posting on social media during court hours.

He also said that conduct with the bars, conduct the litigants and conduct with the court staff are the other aspects to have discipline on. To ensure impartiality, he advised judges to remain calm when dealing with challenging lawyers and avoid private meetings in their chambers unless legally necessary for the sake of transparency.

He stressed the value of building a positive relationship with court staff, treating them with dignity and respect, to facilitate smooth court operations. He said: “You should be the first to enter your chamber and last to leave with your staff.”

He reminded the senior judges to become a mentor to the junior judges and not their critique. A senior judge should not have a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relation with junior judges rather should foster growth and development.

Justice Oka emphasized effective case management by suggesting that judges maintain a diary to keep track of case dates. He encouraged them to efficiently dispose of long-pending matters, ensuring timely resolution. He also stressed the importance of minimizing unnecessary delays, avoiding repeated witness summonses without valid reasons, and thorough preparation by reading case details beforehand. Furthermore, he advised judges to stay updated on the latest Supreme Court judgments across various subjects, ensuring informed decision-making.

Lastly, he highlighted the importance of art of writing judgement, emphasizing that the contents should be easily understandable by the litigants. He stressed the importance of using simple language, brevity, and precision in judgments. Moreover, he encouraged judges to remain impervious to social media influences and not be swayed by concerns about consequences, as their primary duty is to uphold justice, a noble and pious responsibility.

The conference featured an interactive session chaired by **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Oka** and co-chaired by **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rajesh Shankar, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand & Chairman, Executive Committee, Judicial Academy, Jharkhand** along with **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Gautam Kumar Choudhary, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand** on the dais. Justice Oka encouraged the young judicial officers to come up and ask questions with ease. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Justice Chaudhary.

The conference was also honoured by the benign presence of **Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ratnaker Bhengra, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand** and all other Hon'ble Judges of High Court of Jharkhand. The event aimed to foster a deeper understanding of judicial ethics among judicial officers, promoting a culture of integrity and accountability in the judiciary.