

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE MEDIATION ASSOCIATION OF INDIA
AND THE FIRST NATIONAL MEDIATION CONFERENCE 2025**

New Delhi: May 03, 2025

I am happy to be here among you at the Launch of the Mediation Association of India and the First National Mediation Conference 2025. I extend my warm greetings and congratulations to the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Bar Council of India, the Law Officers, and all stakeholders involved in making this historic moment possible.

Mediation, as I understand it, is an essential part of the delivery of justice, which is at the heart of the Constitution of India – our founding text. Mediation can speed up the delivery of justice not only in the specific case under consideration, but also in other cases, by reducing the burden on courts of a large number of litigations. It can make the overall judicial system much more efficient. It can thus open up the developmental pathways that might have been blocked up. It can enhance both the ease of doing business and the ease of living. Mediation, when we see it this way, becomes a key instrument to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

It was with this understanding that the Government, as part of a series of legal reforms, took steps to have a consolidated law on mediation. The result was the Mediation Act, 2023, which provides comprehensive recognition to the mediation process. It is aimed at enabling the further evolution of a culture of alternative conflict and dispute resolution.

You are well aware of the fact that India has a long and rich tradition of judicial mechanisms in which such out-of-court settlements were more of a norm than exception. The institution of Panchayat is legendary for

fostering amicable resolutions. The Panchayat's endeavour was not only to resolve the dispute but also to remove any bitterness among the parties about it. It was a pillar of social harmony for us. Unfortunately, the colonial rulers ignored this exemplary legacy when they imposed an alien legal system on us.

While the new system did have a provision for mediation and out-of-court resolution, and the old tradition of alternative mechanisms did continue, there was no institutional framework for it. The new law plugs that loophole and has a number of provisions that will form the foundation of a vibrant and effective mediation ecosystem in India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure you all know about the incident in the life of Mahatma Gandhi relating to the mediation practice, but let me relate it again. Gandhiji was invited to South Africa by Dada Abdulla, who was originally from Porbandar too. Gandhiji's role was supposed to be only helping the main lawyer in a commercial dispute. But he studied the case papers in great detail. He realised that the facts of the case were in favour of Dada Abdulla and the law was bound to take his side. But he also knew that the litigation could go on and on. That would ruin both the plaintiff and the defendant, who happened to be relatives too.

Gandhiji then approached the other party, Tyeb Seth, and urged him to take the arbitration route. He worked hard to persuade both parties. He writes in his autobiography that it was his duty to befriend both of them and bring them together. Eventually, his efforts were successful and the two decided on an out-of-court settlement. Both were happy and both rose in public estimation. Gandhiji writes, [and I quote], "My joy was boundless. I had learnt the true practice of law." [Unquote]

As long as Gandhiji practised law, he strove to bring about compromise in every case, and turned rivals into friends in hundreds of cases.

It is this Gandhian attitude to dispute resolution that is embodied in the practice of mediation and also in the Mediation Act. It gives priority to harmony instead of discord. Of course, both parties usually believe they are right, and leading them to an amicable compromise can be very difficult. For true mediation, we have to appeal to the better angels of our nature. As stakeholders in mediation, that is the demanding but worthy task before you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Mediation Act was the first step in consolidating the civilisational legacy. Now we need to add momentum to it and strengthen its practice. The First National Mediation Conference is not a mere ceremonial event; it is a call to action. It calls upon us to collectively shape the future of mediation in India — by nurturing trust, building professional capabilities, and making mediation accessible to every citizen, across all sections of society. The establishment of the Mediation Association of India is a significant step forward in carrying this legacy into the future. It institutionalizes and promotes mediation as a preferred, structured, and widely accessible mode of dispute resolution — an approach that is timely and much needed in today's dynamic and complex world.

We should see effective dispute and conflict resolution as not merely a legal necessity but a societal imperative. Mediation fosters dialogue, understanding and collaboration. These values are essential for building a harmonious and progressive nation. It will lead to the emergence of a conflict-resilient, inclusive and harmonious society.

I am sure that the day is not far when mediation is embedded into the core of India's legal, social and economic systems. Then it will not be merely an alternative process, but the preferred path for resolution. Indeed, India is poised to emerge as the world's mediation thought leader, since the mindset required for it is ingrained in our civilisational heritage.

The Dispute resolution mechanism under the Mediation Act should be effectively extended to rural areas so that the Panchayats are legally empowered to mediate and resolve the conflicts in villages. Social harmony in villages is an essential prerequisite of making the nation strong.

I congratulate the organizers for organizing this national conference on a subject of critical importance. I am confident that the outcomes of the conference will help give shape to the mediation landscape in the country. My best wishes to you.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat!