DEMOCRACY AND TRUTH GO HAND IN HAND: JUSTICE CHANDRACHUD

Relevant for: Polity | Topic: Judiciary in India: its Structure, Organization & Functioning, Judges of SC & High Courts, Judgments and related Issues

D.Y. Chandrachud

Supreme Court judge Justice D.Y. Chandrachud highlighted the necessity of speaking truth to power, be it even an "imperial power" or an "all-powerful State".

"Democracy needs truth to survive. Democracy and truth go hand in hand. Speaking truth to power is a right of every citizen in a democracy. It is equally a duty," Justice Chandrachud said in his address at the Sixth M.C. Chagla Memorial online lecture on Saturday.

He said truth was both a sword and a shield in a democracy.

Justice Chandrachud said the Supreme Court acted like a "Truth Commission" for posterity, using its ability to document the truth on whether or not due process was followed during the pandemic. He said a nation's shared public memory should be founded on truth.

The apex court judge said the act of speaking truth counteracts power and obviates the predisposition to tyranny.

Spaces of reason

Justice Chandrachud said speaking truth to power was absolutely essential for modern democracies to survive. Democracies are seen as "spaces of reason" where every decision taken by the people in power should be backed by adequate reasons. Any reason based on a falsehood would be no reason at all, the apex court judge said.

Noting that totalitarian governments were linked to "constant reliance on falsehoods in order to establish dominance", Justice Chandrachud said truth in governance was important to instil a sense of public trust in democracy.

The judge said the fact that our founding fathers were aware of it was evident in our motto *Sathyamev Jayate* (truth shall prevail).

"As citizens of a democracy, we need to commit ourselves to the search for truth as a key aspiration of our society," Justice Chandrachud said.

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