

Justice S. R. Bannurmath,  
Chairman of Maharashtra  
State Human Rights  
Commission :

# Human Rights at your door step- A novel Idea to propagate Human Rights

Justice S. R. Bannurmath is the former Chief Justice of Kerala High Court and the present Chairman of Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission. Justice Bannurmath was also the Judge of Karnataka High Court and served as State Public Prosecutor and Government Advocate of the Government of Karnataka. He graduated from Raja Lakhamgouda Law College, Belgaum.

As a Judge of High Court of Karnataka, Mr. Bannurmatah has rendered thousands of judgements in all branches of law and many landmark judgments in criminal law giving new dimension to criminal justice system, safeguarding interest of accused, victims and the society. However considering his vast knowledge and expertise in criminal law, as a defence advocate and as State Public Prosecutor, many times he was assigned major criminal cases both as a single judge and in division bench.

His landmark Judgments include five death penalty judgments. Noted amongst them are Swami Shardhdhananda case and a psychopath serial killer Umesh Reddy. In an acid attack case known as Haseena case, he enhanced imprisonment for 5 years to life imprisonment with compensation of Rs.2 lakhs to the victim – the first ever in India. At the same time considering plights of such victims in general, he directed the Govt. to implement a scheme framed by him for rehabilitation of such acid victims including medical and monetary help.

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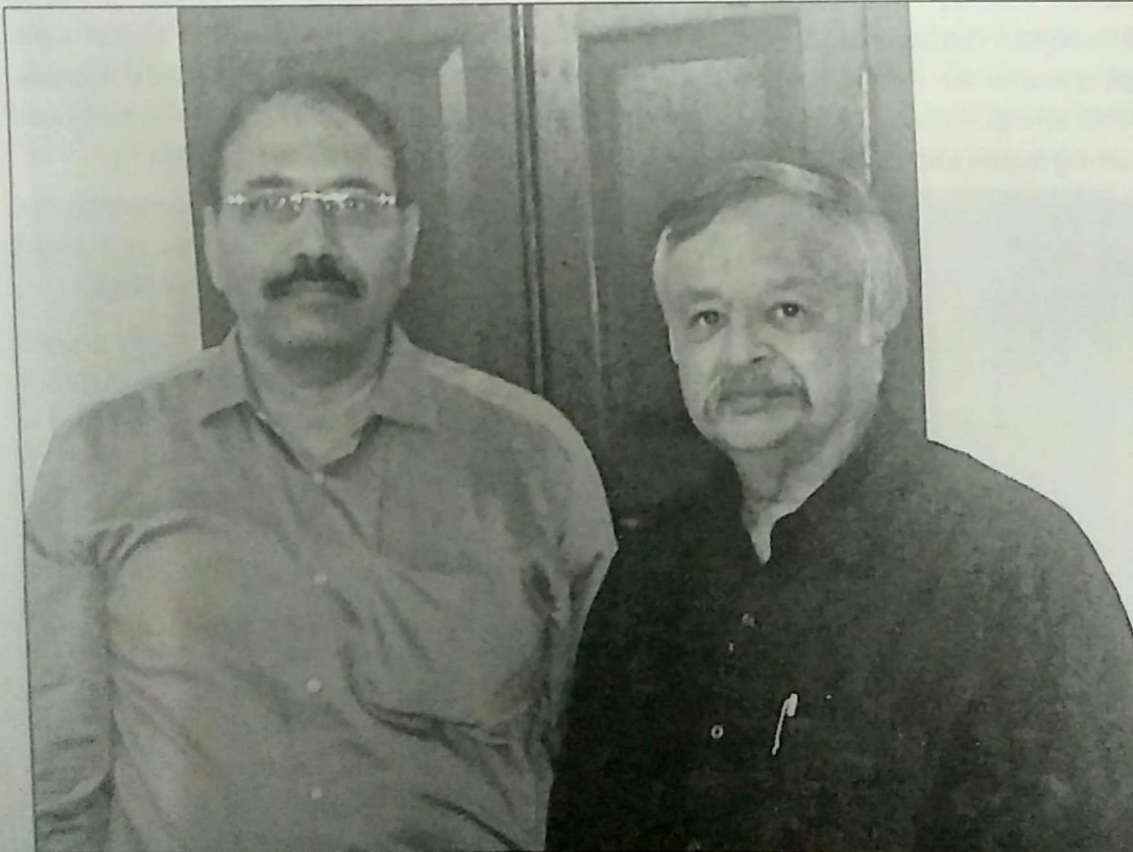
He was the first Chief Justice in India, who declared his assets along with all judges of Kerala High Court and posted on website of Kerala High court in September, 2009 and also established first Green Bench to protect environment and bio-structure of Kerala. Justice Krishna Iyer, former SC Judge and acclaimed jurist of international repute wrote on his retirement day,

“To honour the great Chief Justice Bannurmatah, the Chief Justice of Kerala, I join you to pay homage to that high noble functionary. He was a great judge and the qualities of a good justice in the words of Socrates run thus: four things belonged to judge; to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly and to decide impartially’.

IHRC Editor-in Chief Mr. Avinash Mokashi had a long interview with Mr. Bannurmatah on wide range of topics relating to the human rights violations in India. Bannurmatah responded with his candid reponse to all the questions. Here is the interview –

*IHRC: How do you look at the comparatively new concept of Human Rights protection because it came to be acknowledged globally only in 1948 when UNO passed the Human Rights Declaration in 1948?*

**Justice Bannurmatah:** It is a fact that Human Rights were acknowledged as inviolable rights of any human being irrespective of his nationality, language, faith, cast or creed after the 1948 declaration by UNO. This was the wisdom that dawned on the world community having experienced the holocaust of the Nazi extermination of



## COVER STORY

jews particularly and the whole tragedy of the two world wars that witnessed the complete sufferings of the humanity. But I believe the rights are inviolable and they existed even before the UN declaration. It only codified and made the world community to take cognizance of what reflected in the conscience of every free political entity.

If you ask me, the Indian culture has long back declared :

ॐ सह नाववतु, सह नौभुनक्तु, सह वीर्यम करवावहै।  
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु, मा विद्विषावहै।

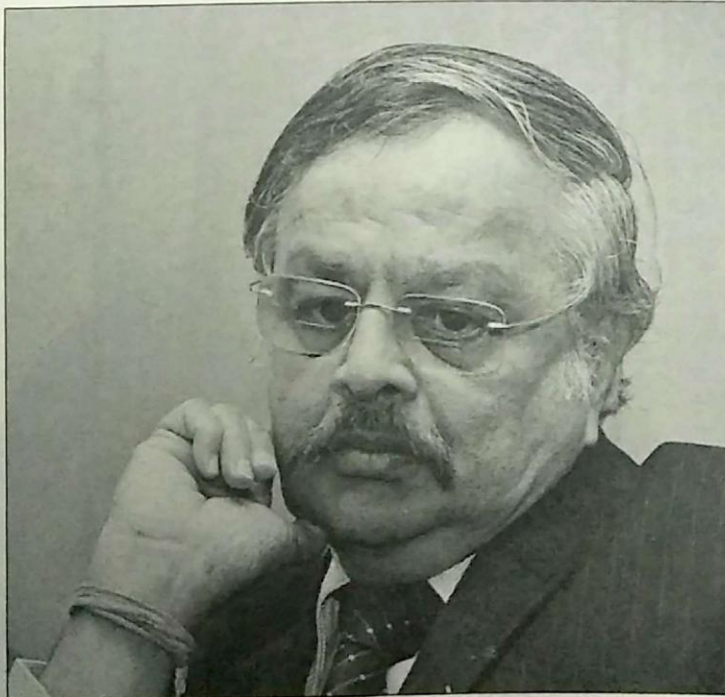
(Let every soul be happy and contented, Let everybody enjoy good health, Let everybody experience and see auspicious things. Let there not be anybody unhappy in this world. We have thought of life of respect and dignity for every human being.

*HRC : As Chairman of the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission what do you see as your priorities ?*

Justice Bannurmath: When I took over charge of the state HR commission, there were about 10,000 pending cases. Because we succeeded in creating awareness of the human rights among the people, 16,000 more cases came to be reported over a period. I also observed that it is not possible for everyone to come to Mumbai. Because it also becomes a costly affair, people don't pursue the cases. I have, therefore, introduced, on experimental basis, a scheme 'Human Rights at Your Doorstep'. Thus under the scheme, we have identified six regions consisting of 3 to 4 districts. The commission camps at one of the regions and conduct open sessions for the public at large. In the first half of a program, we create awareness among masses and sensitise the Public Servants on their duties.

In the other half, petitions pertaining to that regions are heard. This has helped the commission to achieve its targets of deciding cases on fast track as well as awareness and sensitisation. This scheme was implemented in Kolhapur, Amravati and Buldhana where we received good response. If this works, we may go ahead with the scheme in other parts of Maharashtra.

*IHRC: What are the major areas of concern you found in promoting HR awareness?*



*Human Rights standards and internationally accepted fundamental freedoms. However, they should strictly adhere to the constitutional provisions and remain within the framework of law.*

Justice Bannurmath: I am more concerned about Palliative Health, Mental Health and Senior citizens wherein care is provided for the terminally ill and their families especially by an organized health service. People are not really aware about the laws for senior citizens and parent protection. We need to create awareness and time bound definite plan of action for these issues.

*IHRC : How do you see the role of NGOs?*

Justice Bannurmath: In the recent past, it is observed that some of the NGOs are misusing the name and symbol of NHRC. NHRC has taken a serious note of Bogus Human Rights activists and NGOs. It was also observed that the NGOs print a note on the letterheads and their publicity literature that the NGO is recognised and affiliated to NHRC. The Supreme Court also has passed an order barring such organisations misusing the name of

NHRC. The NHRC has also clearly exhibited on its website that we do not entertain such things NGOs. The commission shall not tolerate this misuse and NGOs will be dealt with in accordance with the law. However, it does not mean that the genuine NGOs are to be discouraged. Their contribution to the cause of Human Rights needs to be recognized and appreciated.

*IHRC : How do you see the role of Human Rights Defenders ?*

The commission welcome Human Rights Defenders. They have an important role to play in creating awareness and promote, protect and support Human Rights standards and internationally accepted fundamental freedoms. However, they should strictly adhere to the constitutional provisions and remain within the framework of law.

*IHRC: In your present posting, what strikes you as a unique feature in Maharashtra ?*

Bannurmath : (with a smile)  
The emblem of Maharashtra Police with the Sanskrit verse is very apt for their role which says – Sad Rakshanay, Khal Nigrahanay i.e. To protect the good and destroy evil. I believe if the department follows only that one single motto, they will be doing a great service to the people of Maharashtra and to the humanity at large.

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...reparing for the competitive exams.

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## The Nashik Police Academy Guides HR Activists

The Maharashtra Police Academy Nashik organized a Seminar on Human Rights between March 3 and 5, 2016. Mr. S.R. Bannurmath, the Chairperson of Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission and Chief Justice, Kerala High Court (Retd) as also Mr. Bhagwanrao More, Member SHRC and IPS Retd, Mr. Kishore Jadhav, IPS, Special Inspector General of Police, SHRC and Mr. Avinash Mokashi Chairman Indian Human Rights Council guided the participants of the Seminar. Mr. Naval Bajaj, IPS, Director of MPA Nasik, Mr. Naresh Waingankar, IPS Dy. Director MPA & S.G. Gaikar, Asst. Director. Coordinated the programme.

## Continue from page... 21 Mumbai International Airport : In the Eye of the Storm, Crores Embezzled ?

and Greenridge Hotels & Resorts had emerged successful. The successful bidder and MIAL were to have a revenue sharing arrangement of 4.65 percent of the gross revenues with a minimum guarantee clause which was agreed to by AAI though the arrangement would have significant adverse impact on the revenue share of AAI. AAI will receive only 1.79 percent of the gross revenue earnings in the hotel project.

As the hotel concession has been awarded to a group entity of MIAL, the upside in the revenue may benefit the GVK group as it is not shared with AAI.

The CAG audit report, it is understood, has been tabled before the Parliament and further referred to Parliamentary Affairs Committee for scrutiny. The parliamentarians will have to seek answers to very searching questions and closely follow the Operations, Management and Development Agreement of 2006 and the structure of Public Private Participation Projects to come to the truth. For the more critical issues, we may wait for the next report of the story. ###

