

Speech for 2nd September, 2008

My Lord the Chief Justice, Justice Ajit Prakash Shah, my esteemed colleagues, Mr.K.C. Mittal, Mr. J.P. Sengh, Mr. D.K. Sharma, President, Vice President and Secretary of Delhi High Court Bar Association, Standing Counsel, Union of India and respected members of the Bar.

My Lord the Chief Justice has been very kind and effusive in his address, in showering praise and attributing qualities of head and heart, which I can only aspire to acquire. Our Chief Justice, who is otherwise known for his objectivity and impartiality, has for once allowed his judgment to be clouded by his affection for me. This affection, respect and admiration, I must confess, is mutual. On a self-appraisal, I find myself to be an ordinary person, who can only venture to claim the capacity to work hard with sincerity and reasonable measure of common sense and firmness.

I joined the Bar in July, 1979 after a successful stint of 10 years in IBM World Trade Corporation, Legal Department, as their associate counsel. This experience gave me commercial maturity and some understanding and knowledge of law. However, I was a novice as far as practice of law and skill of advocacy were concerned.

Our High Court Bar is one of the finest cosmopolitan Bars in the country. The High Court Bar received this non-descript, uninfluential lawyer without any reference or influence into its fold and gave all the encouragement. I am a product of this Bar and have learnt and grown with the Bar.

There are fond memories of seeking help from seniors. I remember going to Mr. P.P. Malhotra, Additional Solicitor General, who, in those days, was regarded as a specialist in Insurance matters, whenever confronted with a problem and solution was eluding. Similarly, consulting Dada, i.e., Mr. Dinesh Mathur, in criminal matters. Help from Mr. Madan Bhatia, Senior Advocate, who is here, was also sought. A heartening feature was that all this consultation or solving the difficulties of a junior by the seniors was gratis. I do not know whether this latter part has changed or still continues.

In the early 90's, the High Court Bar Association was a close knit Bar with 1000-1200 members and the number of lawyers effectively practicing was even less. This facilitated close contact and interaction between members of the Bar and long term affinities and friendships being developed.

I had the honour of being the member of the Executive and Vice President of the High Court Bar in the year 1990-91, during which time, several thorny issues like rise in the pecuniary jurisdiction of this Court and bifurcation of courts arose. It is an interesting co-incidence that the bifurcation of courts in Delhi, which was a pending issue and in demand since 90's, is now finally going to take place with the division of Delhi into 9 Districts and modalities for the same are recommended by a Committee presided over by me.

Our Bar traditionally does not discriminate against and rather has always welcomed outside Judges and thereby truly demonstrated its cosmopolitan character. Judges from outside easily adjusted and

found themselves at home. Rather, the fondness of the Court has grown so much that hardly anyone likes to leave Delhi.

Our Court today has a variety of litigation on multifarious subjects with the seat of Union of India being in New Delhi and 85% of the intellectual property litigation being in Delhi High Court, the same has accentuated and also helped our Bar grow from strength to strength. Resultantly, our Bar has produced number of stalwarts, who are briefed not only in our Court but for other High Courts and the Supreme Court. Generally, the office bearers of the Bar have also been stalwarts in the profession and this has helped growth of the Bar Association and related Institutions and welfare schemes. The current Executive has taken up in right earnest, the ambitious project of underground parking apart from other welfare schemes.

We also need to help and encourage the younger members of the Bar. Especially, a well-prepared young lawyer deserves all the encouragement to argue and more so, where relief is likely to be given. This has been the consistent practice followed by me at the Bench.

I have had a very satisfying judicial career and have received the affection of my colleagues and the Bar in ample measure. I have found the support staff of the Registry responsive and having had some knowledge of the state of affairs in other courts, I can say that our Registry and especially Protocol Department and other Administrative Divisions are one of the best in the country. I have received excellent cooperation from my personal staff, which enabled

me to discharge my duties. My colleagues have always been a source of strength and inspiration to me.

At times, unpalatable and difficult decisions are required to be taken as part of our sacred judicial duties. Fortunately, we are not the last Court and any errors by us can be corrected. Barring the above, I would like to say that if I have been ever remiss in my court behaviour or impatient with members of the Bar or caused any offence to anyone of you, I seek to be excused for the same. It is said that "Man's feelings are always purest and most glowing in the hour of meeting and of farewell". What I have said comes from the heart.

Let me end by saying, "I have no parting sigh to give, so take my parting smile".

Thank you.