

My Lord the Chief Justice, my brother and sister judges, former CJ A.P. Shah, Mr. Chandhiok learned Additional Solicitor General and President of the Delhi High Court Bar Association, Mr. Ved Prakash Sharma from the Bar Council of Delhi, Honourable members of the Bar, Registrar General and officers of the Registry and friends.

Many thanks for the kind words – they sound very nice but frankly I have some reservations about whether I deserve them. I am one of the players in a team and so, even if the kind words are merited, it is the team that deserves them, not an individual.

Every parting has sorrow attached to it. The question really is who feels the sorrow and how much sorrow. On my part, initially, I did feel sorrow at having to cut the umbilical cord that I have with this High Court which gave birth to my professional career; I did feel sorrow at the thought of not being able to continue my active association with this great High Court; and I did feel sorrow at having to part company with my colleagues and friends in this Court.

But, looking back, I find that there is really no cause for sorrow – for me, there is a feeling of joy. I say this because I believe that between the period that I joined the Bar in 1977 and today, this Court has eventually been given its due recognition and has

assiduously built for itself a reputation far greater than what it was earlier.

Delhi High Court was not such a fancied High Court back then in 1977, but today it is considered one of the premier High Courts in this country, if not *the* premier High Court. This has happened because of four key players in the justice delivery system.

First and foremost, I must recognize and compliment the Bar of this Court for the tremendous strides made in the last three decades. There was a time when for every important case, an advocate from the Supreme Court or from some other High Court was engaged as the lead counsel. Today, the position has completely reversed. Advocates from the Bar of this Court are dominant in the Supreme Court and many of our lawyers regularly appear in other High Courts as the lead counsel.

What is the reason for this? It is cynically said that the lawyers of this Court are easy-going and fun loving. Yes, this is correct and yes, it is because of their fun loving attitude that the lawyers of this Court have reached a paramount position. As Dale Carnegie, the famous writer and lecturer put it: People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing. This is the key to the success of the lawyers of this Court – they work hard and yet they enjoy life and their work. What could be better than this? It is this unique quality of our lawyers that has made this institution appreciated

and respected today. In this, I find enough reason for joy and exhilaration.

Secondly, the judges of this Court have always been great and glorious— but unfortunately they were either snatched away from us or not given the recognition they deserved. When I started my professional career, we had judges who were respected for their integrity, their learning and their erudition. I am proud to say that all my colleagues today have kept up the high expectations that society demands from them.

By way of an example, I may mention that the extent of transparency in the functioning of the judges of this Court is without parallel anywhere in this country. It is a little known but very important fact that all our judges had declared their assets to our Chief Justice well before anybody had even thought of asking any question. On the judicial side, we were the first and even today, we are the only ones to have made all our judicial orders available on the internet for anybody to see. In this, I feel both humbled and exalted – humbled by the fact that someone somewhere thought it fit to put me in a position adorned by legal luminaries, past and present, and exalted by the fact that I had the opportunity to be a part of this great High Court both as a lawyer and as a judge.

Thirdly, the judicial officers assisting this Court in their own way have paved the path for recognition by their constant endeavours. The changes that they been instrumental in, in the functioning of the district judiciary is unprecedented. They have been responsible for bringing about a technological revolution in the justice delivery system through the use of computers and video conferencing. It is a matter of common knowledge that even the former President of India Dr. Abdul Kalam had shown keen interest in the computerization of our district courts. Our district judiciary has shown to the country that attitudinal changes can give wonderful results through simple justice delivery mechanisms like mediation, plea bargaining and legal aid. The direction that they have shown to us and the hope that they have engendered in the common man in Delhi is a cause for pride.

Finally, when this Court is spoken of as a model of efficiency and good management, the credit must go to the officers of our Registry. Nowhere in the country can any Registry ensure that a case is listed within 24 hours of its filing. However, in Delhi this was the practice more than 30 years ago when there were no computers and other technological tools. Today, even though there is easy availability of computers, no High Court matches up to the standards set by our Registry at least three decades ago. In every other respect as well, our Registry matches up with the best – be it

in the availability of certified or uncertified copies or the maintenance and management of files or the library or the protocol facilities or any other aspect of court administration. May I request the Registrar General to convey to the officers of the Registry, including the staff attached to me, my compliments to the willing group of hard-working persons and my gratitude to them for demonstrating to us that efficiency is possible and, to slightly rephrase Frank Lloyd Wright the great architect and educator, to demonstrate the homily that if you believe that something **can** be done, you can make it happen.

For all these reasons, while I do admit to a tinge of sorrow, I feel a greater thrill of excitement at having been a part of this great institution. I look to the future and to be able to say of the past that once upon a time I proudly belonged to the Delhi High Court.

Mr. Chandhiok and Mr. Sharma, both of you are great leaders of the Bar. You have known me for long and you know that I am temperamentally volatile and impulsive. I have no doubt that because of this I would most certainly have hurt the feelings of some lawyer or the other over the last 10 years as a judge of this Court. It was totally unintentional and certainly without any malice and I express my sincere apologies for any discomfort that I may have caused any member of the Bar at any point of time. May I

request you to convey this to all the members of this illustrious Bar.

May I express to you, my friend and Chief Justice, my gratitude for having cut short your vacation to be with me today. I will always remember this grand gesture. May I express my gratitude to my brother and sister judges, all of whom are present today either physically or in thought for the wonderful years we have had together, the years when we have shared our joys and sorrows as a family should, and for the support and guidance that you gave during my short stint as Acting Chief Justice. May I take the liberty of saying to you that this Court has always had the tradition of delivering and dispensing quality and responsive justice. Please keep this great tradition alive and I have no doubt that the Bar will support you in this and keep our flag flying high.

Thank you and farewell!