

**FAREWELL SPEECH OF
HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE SANGITA DHINGRA SEHGAL**

Hon'ble Justice D. N. Patel, The Chief Justice,

My esteemed brother and sister colleagues,

Smt. Maninder Acharya, Ld. Additional Solicitor General,

All standing counsels for the Central Government,

Mr. Rahul Mehra, Ld. Standing Counsel (Criminal),

Mr. Ramesh Singh, Ld. Standing Counsel (Civil),

Other counsels of the Govt. of NCT of Delhi,

Mr. K.C. Mittal, Ld. Chairman, Bar Council of Delhi,

Mr. Mohit Mathur, Ld. President,

Mr. Jatan Singh, Ld. Vice President,

Mr. Abhijat, Ld. Hony. Secretary and

Other office bearers of the High Court of Delhi Bar Association,

Former Presidents and office bearers of the Bar Association,

President, Hony. Secretaries and office bearers of District Bar Associations,

Ld. Senior Advocates,

My Family Members, Friends and Staff Members,

Dear Advocates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I stand here today, with my heart full of gratitude, trying to comprehend how this journey has finally come to an end. For as long as I can remember, I've believed in destiny and have utmost faith in God, for if not for that, I could've never imagined to be blessed with such great opportunities in my life.

Today, as I demit the office, and bid adieu to my colleagues at the bar and the bench, first and foremost, I would like to say that, to this place and to the kindness of these people, I owe absolutely everything.

My journey as a lawyer began in 1982 and after 38 years, it comes to an end today. It is taxing to express the experiences of this long journey in a few words but still, I will make an effort to share moments which shaped me into the person that I am.

I was lucky to receive guidance and wisdom of many remarkable personalities who encouraged me during this journey.

I was born to Mr. P. C. Dhingra and Ms. Swarna Lata Dhingra, who hail from present day Pakistan. My father had joined the Lahore High Court in the year 1946 and at the time of partition, moved to the East Punjab High Court at Shimla. Thereafter, he moved to the Punjab High Court at Chandigarh when it was established in the year 1955. Finally, upon the establishment of the High Court of Delhi in the year 1966 pursuant to the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, he came to Delhi in January 1967 and served as the Secretary to three Chief Justices of the High Court of Delhi including **Justice I. D. Dua**, **Justice H. R. Khanna** and **Justice Hardayal Hardy**.

My mother, my brother and I stayed back in Chandigarh for the completion of our schooling. While growing up, I developed close association with my maternal uncle who was a lawyer at the Punjab & Haryana High Court. I found his personality to be impressive which impacted and influenced me to consider pursuing Law. Upon the completion of my graduation, though I enrolled myself in M.A. Honours (English) at Panjab University, I soon gave up the course to pursue Law and I told my parents that I had no interest in studying M.A. Honours (English) and wanted to fulfil my dream of becoming a lawyer.

This is how I came to join the Campus Law Centre, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi in the year 1978. On the completion of my law school, I got enrolled as an Advocate and joined the Chambers of **Justice O. N. Vohra**, who specialised in Criminal and Land Acquisition matters. He had also served as an Additional Sessions Judge as well as an Additional Judge of the High Court of Delhi and his valuable guidance helped me in preparing for the Delhi Judicial Services Examination. With the grace of the Almighty, I joined the Delhi Judicial Services in the year 1985.

It is a matter of chance that after only two years of joining the service, I was given the additional charge of Secretary, Legal Aid & Advise Committee at Tis Hazari Courts and did legal aid work till 1995, along-with my posting as a Metropolitan Magistrate.

In the year 1995, I was sent on deputation as the Competent Authority, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Although I was required to discharge judicial functions as Competent Authority,

Mr. Manjit Singh, the then Commissioner, MCD appointed me as the Joint Director of Mobilisation Community Development, MCD. As the Joint Director, I got an opportunity to visit the slums in Delhi and I got first-hand experience of the practical difficulties faced by the people living in the slums. This assignment also inspired me to write a book titled “*An Exhaustive Guide to the Slum Area (Improvement & Clearance) Act, 1956*”.

The burden of work did not leave me. On my return from deputation, I was posted as the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) for three years at Patiala House Courts and then the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Delhi (CMM). The ACMM was conferred with the exclusive jurisdiction under the Customs Act, 1962, Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973 and Official Secrets Act, 1923. In those days, there used to be only one ACMM/CMM for the whole of Delhi, naturally there used to be heavy workload and the court room used to be filled with Lawyers. During this tenure, I faced all the senior advocates including **Mr. P. N. Lekhi, Mr. K. K. Luthra and Mr. D. C. Mathur** which was a great learning experience for me. I learnt to be patient while hearing the arguments without interrupting the counsel, to make notes and to finally dismiss the bail application.

I was also entrusted by the High Court of Delhi with the mammoth task of bifurcation of Delhi District Courts into Five zones. The work of all Metropolitan Magistrates of Delhi was to be rationalized to secure equal distribution of criminal cases in the capital and supervise functioning of 110 MMs in Delhi including

Special Municipal Magistrates dealing with Traffic Challans and cases of Municipal Corporation Act. During this tenure for the 1st time Special Courts in Jail were organized for under-trials involved in petty cases.

In the year 2004, I was selected as the Secretary for the Press Council of India. I had hardly worked for about 4½ months when **Justice B. A. Khan**, the then Executive Chairman of Delhi Legal Services Authority asked me to return, only to be appointed as the Member Secretary of the Delhi Legal Services Authority.

I joined the Delhi Legal Services Authority in December 2004, where I worked for about little less than five years. Seeing the gravity of the hardships faced by the poor, we at Delhi Legal Services Authority launched the Mobile Legal Services, set up 24 Hours Permanent Legal Services Clinic, summer and winter internship programs for students pursuing law and the Legal Aid Centre at Tihar Jail. I am extremely grateful to **Justice B. A. Khan** for providing me this opportunity which helped me to bring out the best in me, changed me as a person, my thinking, working style, attitude, and gave me insight into the problems faced by the poor and the general public at large, who were deprived of basic right of access to justice. All this was possible under the guidance, the art to administer, the strict discipline and the endless support of the stalwarts of our noble profession, **Justice Vijender Jain** and **Justice T. S. Thakur**, coupled with the support of the then Chief Minister of Delhi Late **Smt. Sheila Dixit**.

After working as the Additional Judge, Tis Hazari Courts and as the Special Judge, Prevention of Corruption Act, I was posted as the District Judge, Saket. In 2013, I joined as the Registrar General of the High Court of Delhi for which I am thankful to **Justice D. Murugesan** and all the other Judges who gave me an opportunity to head the administration of the High Court.

Soon on my joining, I faced challenge of enhancement of the pecuniary jurisdiction of this Hon'ble Court to deal and entertain the original side matters. This issue led to massive strikes in the District Courts as well as the High Court. The then executive committee of the DHCBA including Mr. A. S. Chandhiok, as the President and Mr. Mohit Mathur, as the Secretary rendered great assistance in order to implement the notification so issued for enhancement of pecuniary jurisdiction.

During my tenure as the Registrar General, I had the privilege of being guided by **Justice B. D. Ahmed**, **Justice N. V. Ramana** and **Justice G. Rohini**.

On 15.12.2014, I was elevated as the Additional Judge of the High Court of Delhi and had the privilege of being guided and showered by the wisdom of my brother and sister Judges of this Hon'ble Court. I would like to thank **Justice Gita Mittal**, my first bench partner, an affectionate and thoughtful person. Coincidentally, I had also shared bench with her at the Campus Law Centre where both of us were pursuing law; **Justice G. S. Sistani**, a person who sparks brilliance & from whom, I learnt many lessons of administration and judicial work and spent longest period on various

roasters; the then **Chief Justice G. Rohini**, with whom I shared the bench and was lucky to get sisterly affection from her side. I shall always remain indebted to her for accommodation, affection and thoughtfulness received from her.

I would also like to thank **Justice Hima Kohli**, whom I know as a neighbour, as a lawyer and a judge with unflinching dedication towards her work; **Justice Siddharth Mridul**, a person who always made me feel comfortable, gave brotherly affection and kept me motivated; **Justice Manmohan**, a knowledgeable, prompt & compassionate person, he has always been very respectful & appreciative of my work and also to **Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw**, who guided me with his precious acumen.

I'm thankful to **Chief Justice D. N. Patel** for considering me and giving me an opportunity to be the President of the Delhi State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

I cannot but forget to thank **Justice C. Hari Shankar**, my vacation Bench partner two years back with whom I cherished working in summer vacations till midnight.

I must also thank the bar without whose assistance, it would have been difficult to discharge and perform my duties as a judge.

It would not have been possible to reach so far without the relentless support of my family members. I am grateful to my late mother for all the sacrifices she made for me and the values and virtues inculcated; my father, who even today at this age is the first person from whom I can solicit the best advice, who is my torchbearer; my late husband Sh. Ravi Sehgal, who had always been a

pillar of strength and support to me and had always contributed to my achievements; my brother Sh. Sandeep Dhingra, who made a fair amount of sacrifices for my sake and my children Keshav and Kamakshi Sehgal, who are a constant source of inspiration to me. I have never seen a sigh of dismay on their faces due to my absence, be it at home, or their school or college or any social function but always a glimmer of pride in their eyes.

I must also thank my entire court staff who have put in great effort and have stood by me in my thick and thin. Their unconditional dedication has enabled me to discharge the duties bestowed upon me. My secretary, Kamlesh Sharma, who joined me when I was elevated, is now part of the family. I would like to thank my former Court Master Sunita Gosain, my Assistant Court Master Nijesh Kumar and my Judicial Assistant Amit Singh Rawat, who have been with me since my appointment as the Registrar General.

I am also thankful to Girish Rawat, my Personal Assistant and Upender Yadav, my Court Attendant, who have been attached with me since my district court days and also to Baswanand Rawat, who has been with me for the last 20 years. I am also thankful to my Court Master Pradeep Kumar, my Senior Personal Assistant Shalini Uniyal Bhatt, my Personal Assistant Ahmed Faraz Ansari and my Court Attendants Abhishek Sharma and Bhupender Gaur.

I cannot forget to thank my chauffeur Billu who served me for many years and passed away in March this year and also to my present chauffeur Radheyshyam.

I am also thankful to my present Law Researchers, Dhruv Arora, Kashish Bajaj, Shivkrit Rai and to the former ones' including Anas Ali, Aman Bakhshi, Kamakshi Verma, Priya Solanki, Rishika Sarraf and Manas Syal for their continued assistance and determination towards the expeditious disposal of work assigned to them.

Even though I am confining myself to the aforesaid names, nevertheless, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every officer and member of the High Court staff, at each level, for their continuous support during my tenure as the Registrar General and after my elevation.

I hope during this indelible journey, I have not hurt anyone, and I sincerely apologize, if I have, for the same would have been purely unintentional.

Thank you all, I pray that may all of your lives shine bright with ever glowing happiness, and shimmer with countless blessings of Almighty.

Jai Hind!