

RETIREMENT REFERENCE: JUSTICE R.S.SODHI

Hon'ble the Chief Justice, Hon'ble Judges, Shri P.P.Malhotra, Learned ASG, Senior Advocates, fellow colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

We have assembled today, to bid farewell to Hon'ble Mr. Justice R.S. S^odhi. I had never thought that my first address as the President of the Delhi High Court Bar Association in the full court reference would be to bid farewell to him. A judge whom I always held in high esteem.

Belonging to a royal family, Justice Sodhi is very down to earth. He has always been a fighter in his own style; probably, this instinct has been imbibed in him from his school days that he spent in Bishop Cotton School, Shimla, and only became stronger during his stint as a general duty pilot in the Air force.

Soon after his graduation and completion of Law from Punjab University, Chandigarh, in 1972 he joined Sarvashri S.S.Chaddha, the then Senior Government Standing Counsel for Union of India, who then went on to become a Judge of this Hon'ble Court and has been a milestone in the history of the bench and the bar. Justice Sodhi also had the guidance of Shri Hardev Singh, presently Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India.

Before being elevated to the bench in the year 1999, Justice Sodhi as a legal professional earned great eminence and made his own mark by taking up prominent cases in the Supreme Court and different courts. He took up sensitive matters at the risk of his life. Besides being an advocate on record, he has been Additional Advocate General for State of Punjab.

His contributions as a judge in this court will be remembered forever. During his tenure of almost eight years, he decided as many as 2604 criminal appeals, 1918 Criminal writs, 3195 criminal revision petitions and 5029 criminal misc. petitions. Even on the civil side the disposal rate is most encouraging and revealing. He disposed of 202 civil writ petitions, 220 Letters patent appeals, 302 rent appeals, 2966 CM mains apart from 573 RSA's and 408 FAO's, In deciding all these matters, I do not know how much mid night oil he must have burnt. This apart, he dealt with various High profile cases as a judge, uninfluenced by media projections and hype.

He has always been a crusader for Human Rights and Civil Liberty and Justice to the last person in the Row. His human touch, sensitivity and pleasing persona made him extremely popular with the Bar. I had always enjoyed appearing and arguing before him while sitting in the Division Bench or in Single Bench. The in depth knowledge of law and ability to quickly comprehend and judge a case in hand are the rare qualities of a judge which Justice Sodhi possesses in abundance.

With Justice Sodhi's retirement, the bench would loose a judge who had always acted passionately with confidence, firmness and clarity. For the Bar it would be his home coming and we welcome him.

No doubt, after Justice Sodhi having retired he would enrich the profession with his vast experience and capability and would help the institution to serve better.

It may be a slight deviation but not out of context, to mention that we need a comprehensive post retirement policy so that the vast and valuable experience can be better utilized to strengthen not only the administration of justice but also build a better social order so that the coming generations can appreciate and follow the tenets of justice and equality.

It would be most appropriate if I describe Justice Sodhi in one line to say:

***“ Hain Aur Bhi Duniya Mein Nyaya-Dheesh Bahut Acchhe
Kahte Hain Ki Sodhi Ka Hai, Andazein Bayan Kuch Aur”***

I, take privilege on behalf of the Delhi High Court Bar Association to express our sincerest gratitude to Honble Mr. Justice R.S.Sodhi and wish him the very best in his future endeavors.

7.11.2007
NEW DELHI

K.C.Miittal
PRESIDENT, DHCBA