**Chief Justice of the Madras HC on his Farewell**

My esteemed Colleagues on the Bench, the Learned Advocate General, all the office bearers of the respective Bar Associations, members of the Registry, the entire staff of the High Court and all my family members who have assembled here. I would especially thank Mr. Shankarnarayanan who has written a beautiful poetic note to honour me with an encomium which I may not have deserved, but still I think I have completed this part of the journey with full satisfaction with no regrets. There is a feeling of fulfilment in me that I have served to the best of my capacity and ability and the oath that I had taken. But that was not possible unless I had the company of such an august brethren at Allahabad, at Patna and now at the end of my career at Madras. Madras is a great place and with its High Court as its institution which is a magnificent embodiment of justice. I am thankful to sister PT Asha, who today in the morning enriched my knowledge about the vibrations that are present in this entire area because it is believed that the entire structure of the High Court is constructed in an area where there used to exist temples. And therefore, the said continuity with its priests is a real honour for any Judge to sit in this High Court and particularly a Chief Justice, as I said yesterday, would be a pilgrimage.

I would begin by saying that I began my career not with any certainty. After completing my graduation I had no other options left except to join law, and then I joined law and started wondering how I would wade myself through. Fortunately, my revered senior (Late) Mr. RN Singh was one of those leading lawyers who was overburdened with cases. When I joined his chambers, it was like almost a thousand files current running and with thousand files already disposed of. So, I was served in this profession with a platter…and I would say it was almost being born in the profession with a silver spoon because I did not have the occasion to struggle as a lawyer which is one of the major components of a practice which a lawyer definitely needs. Nonetheless, under his guidance, I went around for nineteen years and by the time I was elevated, it was just hard labour and passion with, at least, five writ petitions and a couple of second appeal petitions being drafted every day. This background which I got was the first step in augmenting whatever we call in our legal profession, ‘the legal accumen’. The tricks of the trade, as you say, and the wit and humour of courtcraft, understanding of judges and apprehending the worst of confrontation either from the Bench or the Bar was all a great experience in the Allahabad High Court.

I was fortunate also to have the opportunity to argue before the judges who had been transferred from the Calcutta High Court. In the days of the policy then, and they were some of the best judges and I must confess today, when I am departing, that it was their recognition of whatever little talent I had that I reached the Bench. My colleagues, who are still there, were a great source of inspiration and help. Without their accompaniment their challenges, their competitive attitude I would not have been able to excel myself. I take this opportunity today to thank all of them who were responsible for moulding me and allowing me to pave a way that ultimately led me to occupy the Bench. I narrated this because I am reminded f one of the American judges who said, ‘*that the greatest challenge in life is what people say you cannot do.* *Most of the things worth doing in life were declared impossible before they were done.*’ This is exactly what I feel today, that there were declarations that one would succeed or may not succeed or land up at an uncertain place in life but inspite of those declarations and the rumours of impossibility I am here what I am and I wish every lawyer, big or small, is able to complete this journey in this way.

I was really overwhelmed with the outstanding farewell given by the Madurai Bar and by the Madras Bar yesterday. One of my colleagues, Justice [PN Prakash](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/pnpj.html) even published his farewell in advance in the Current Tamil Nadu Cases and it is worth reading, which is a piece of poetry. Also as I just now mentioned, the letter of Mr Shankarnarayanan, and I think are my blessings and real earnings. All my colleagues in one way or the other wished me good and many of them showered me with some of the choicest books that they felt would be read by me. I can’t forget brother [Parthiban](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/vpnj.html) and brother [Seshasayee](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/nssj.html) as well as brother [GR Swaminathan](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/grsj.html) who with their outstanding erudition have made me learn the language of the law and the tricks of the trade have been taught to me by Brother Venkatesh Anand. There are many colleagues who have taught me something and I have learnt from them. The patient and very serious composition of brother Kothari and brother [Sathyanarayanan](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/msnj.html), the extreme and humble personality of brother [Subbiah](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/rpsj.html), the cheerful personality of brother [Sundresh](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/mmsj.html), the learned company of brother [Sivagnanam](http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/tssj.html) and I would continue to say about everybody but I will be failing in my duty that my sisters on the bench, if they have not outclassed my male colleagues they have certainly established a benchmark by telling the entire world that female judges if elevated will match no less than their male counterparts.

A little word about lawyers: With the competition and with the growth of the law, there is a lot of rush in courts, but there is always a search by the litigants for the best of the lawyer. All lawyers today, big and small, have the greatest opportunity to serve the public at large. But I must tell you that there is an equal rising disbelief and an inherent hesitation when one goes to engage a lawyer. The other side of the coin is that lawyers and doctors are embodiments of faith. When a client entrusts a brief, he does it with a sense that he will achieve justice and that is the end product that he wishes to receive. It is in this context that a lawyer’s duty is the most responsible and in order to dispel any such disbelief, I think, a disciplined conduct is essential.

***Why has the subject of law not been assigned the Nobel Prize?***

We all live with prejudices and every human being has a prejudice. Broadly as I have understood, there are two kinds of prejudices: Prejudice of interest and prejudice of ignorance. You have to avoid both these and therefore, when it comes to lawyers, they have to shed their prejudices because they also have to perform not a biased, but an impartial duty to achieve what is known as justice, yet they have to serve the interest of the litigants and their clients. This opportunity can be availed of with a discipline which I recently learnt and I am trying to compare as an illustration: When I went to Sriharikota on a short visit to meet the anxiety of my little grandson who sits here, more interested in spacecraft. When I took rounds of the launching pad and when I met the scientist there, the **first** thing which I witnessed was their humility. They were far more academically superior to what I was, yet the humility that they displayed is the first trait that a lawyer must try to inculcate. The **second** what I found was, their simplicity: hair going on haywire, with slippers and no formal dress on, they just looked like very simple people with no errs and egos and what I found was they took us around with such passion as if they have received somebody as a special guest. At that point I wondered and all my brothers would think over it. Particularly, who meet such things in their judgments. Please ponder and I will also request the learned ASGI and the Advocate General to think over it and discuss this amongst them. *Why has the subject of law not been assigned the Nobel Prize?* We come up with so much of original thoughts with so much of dealings with life itself; but why is it that social science, economics, literature get their share of Nobel prize – why not law? Please think over it and if you are able to make some suggestions on this I would be glad to join you on this issue and that is what the thought came to me when I was witnessing the things at Sriharikota. I believe and that is, subject to correction by anyone, it is the passion of scientists and their absolute devotion to their subject and the sense of achievement that can be perceived thereafter that appears to be the reason for Nobel prizes being reserved for them. Is the legal profession and the entire legal fraternity today embalmed with such devotion, passion or erudition so as to entitle them to claim a place amongst the Nobel prize winners?

**“*The young ones know the Rules, but it is the old ones who know the exceptions.*” Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes**

The **third** thing which I learnt from Sriharikota was that the scientists were explaining the entire Launchpad and the system over there through health related terms. The would say that this pillar or structure is the umbilical cord of the rocket and it is after all the health conditions, as prescribed, are suited for perfection, then only the button is pressed for the launch of the vehicle. Not only this, they also used that we perform a complete surgery which is amputating the project in the event the trajectory of the rockets fails which has to be done in 45 seconds. I asked them, you have used such terms, how do you manage to plan and execute such wonders of science? Then they started explain in human terms. They said, the pillars are round in shape, because we don’t believe in edges. “Edges obstruct”, they said. ‘Edges’ was nothing else but egos and prejudices. I then asked them, why are you making these comparisons? They replied with great pride, “All our scientists – senior scientists, Directors and Chairmen who have retired, they still come to us and we invite them whenever we are about to undertake a major project. They come here with the same passion, without any egos and prejudices, just to see that we do not fail.” This is the attitude of the peers at Sriharikota. I take this opportunity to draw this illustration in our legal fraternity just to remind all our junior lawyers that all activities – drafting, delivery, art of persuasion should not be without insights. You have to measure yourself first and then take a step forward. You have to get blessed first. As I said this yesterday in my address to the Madras Bar Association reminding the Court of Justice Holmes that, *‘the young ones know the Rules, but it is the old ones who know the exceptions.’* Well, this might be amusing to some of us, but this is the truth of life. I hope that my journey in Madras has been comfortable to one and all.

**Now, I have to begin with my thanksgiving before I conclude**.

Beginning with the Almighty who brought me in this world with all my ancestors, all my family members including my better half and my grandchildren, all my in-laws and particularly my mother-in-law, my sister and sister-in-laws who are present here, they have been a great and a valuable support at every moment in my life. Not only they, but all those who were involved with me – the clerks, the drivers, the domestics – each one of them is responsible for my rising to this position because had I been involved myself with their duties maybe I would not have reached here. I thank all my colleagues at the Bar at Allahabad and Patna. I thank all my colleagues on the Bench at Allahabad and Patna and in particularly Dr. Justice B.S. Chauhan who has been my mentor at Allahabad. I will never forget the blessings of Dr Justice DY Chandrachud as my Chief Justice who was very much responsible for everything that I have achieved after he became my Chief Justice.

I would be failing in my duty to thank Mr Justice AN Verma of the Allahabad High Court who was the first one to moot my name for elevation before Justice Tarun Chatterjee who was kind enough to recommend me for elevation. There are a host of others who have contributed to this – both at the Bar and on the Bench. I would then thank those unsung heroes who were responsible for many things that they did. They are my Chartered Accountant Mr Rishi Kohli, the publishers of many journals who provided me with the best of the systems. The booksellers who are kind enough to inform me of every possible good book that would add to my personality and there is a lot to thank the entire community that came together to bid me best wishes when I was elevated to the Bench. I come to the members of the Bar at Madras. It is not a eulogy but a sense of satisfaction - a genuine and a sincere appreciation. They are the epitome of excellence of whatever I have seen of the Bar in all the three High Courts where I have been. Why I say so is, that the lawyers have the unique ability of offering multiple alternatives when they argue their straightforward points. But nonetheless, with all the judges we have on the Bench they have the capacity to mould every such arguments into a pragmatic and a learned judgment. It said that the Bar is the mother of the Bench, this is really true I that sense which I have witnessed at Madras. Young and old, all can match each other and they can satisfy and persuade any Bench and I could see and rather, I have heard also that lawyers directly connecting themselves to the Supreme Court and showing their par excellence matching their arguments with the best of the Advocates of the Supreme Court. The pandemic has given opportunity to many of our lawyers to show their excellence.

I have to thank everybody. There is no one who has not done a little thing for me. But there is a special thanks which I have to mention and that is because you have to have a pillar in the family who can support you in an unstinting way, leaving you unconcerned about what is happening in your house and that is my elder brother who has not been able to make it here and of course to some extent my son who has taken over my responsibilities. My daughter-in-laws with their background and support have been a real sense of a very satisfied family life. Even though, I just now mentioned to sister (Justice) P.T. Asha, a quote of (Late) Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the US Supreme Court, whose mother-in-law passed on to her that you see, the secret of a good married and happy life is that you should learn to be deaf at times. I am happy and content. My level of satisfaction is not less than that of a saint. I have not yet been able to understand the Almighty but this legal fraternity in my entire career as taught me a lot and I think that at the end of my mortal innings I will be able to achieve that end. I now come to thank the entire registry of this High Court which has been continuously working round the clock in this pandemic and it is they who made me feel that I have the moral responsibility to remain in the High Court. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank my personal staff, court staff, drivers and all those who have served me and fed me at the Chief Justice’s residence. I would once again thank all those who have been responsible for my safe stay at Madras including the doctors who treated me at the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Hospital and I must thank Mr Kannappan who was day in and day out over there. The Registrar liason-ing had been continuously and cautiously keeping track of not only my health but the health of all judges and their families. I must thank her for her attentive role that she has played. One of my staff is outstanding and that is Mr Sashi, who with his most able talent of stenography and yesterday he taught me an English word which I had used in an official communication and shared the same with a couple of judges. I thank him because he is an asset to the High Court.

There are many other people who I had to thank and if I have forgotten, please excuse me. But in the end I would ask for forgiveness <*with folded hands and emotionally*> if I have done anything wrong. Thank You!

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