

## **Hon'ble the Chief Justice**

Friends, on the Bench and off the Bench

A very good day to all of you.

Friends, when I joined the Bench, I was told that Judges speak only through their judgments and not otherwise. But now, when I am a Judge for very few hours more, I make this exception and take this opportunity to share with you one of the things which dawned upon me while working from home office for last nearly one and a half years during the pandemic.

Performing the role of a Judge, who is the author of judgments / orders in resolution of disputes, seeking which consumers of legal system through the Courts, I was in the position of an actor of a film who thinks that the commercial success of the film depends solely upon him. I saw the podium of the Court as the stage, where I have to perform, with the result / outcome depending upon me only.

However during the lockdown I realized that though I, as a Judge, was available, the lawyers were available, but the legal system was unable to perform. What was missing was the staff of this court, which most of us don't even notice, and which staff members are generally hidden behind walls and doors, to not the best ventilated areas of the court complex. Without the said staff members being in a position to step out of their houses owing to the lockdown, one realized, that the Judges and lawyers inspite of availability of their electronic devices to virtually interface with each other, were unable to function the legal system. Even when this court began the virtual hearings, the backbone of the virtual hearings was the staff of the court including of the Computer Cell of this court. All of them, at the risk of their lives, stepped out of

the safety net of their homes and ventured into the court complex / premises so that Judges and lawyers, from the comfort of their respective residences / offices, could bring the wheels of justice into motion again. It was the said staff members of this court, who were receiving the files, whether in physical or electronic forms, arranging, indexing, bookmarking them for the convenience of the Judges so that no time is wasted in searching the pages and electronically forwarding them to the Judges and also to the lawyers. Not only so, there was another area where the staff, particularly the personnel of the Computer Cell of this court, played a stellar role. Not all of us were / are deft with the electronic devices or operation thereof for virtual hearings. All it took for any of us was, to call up the personnel of the Computer Cell of this court, who very patiently and painstakingly guided us through the electronic devices to resolve the issues/obstacles and which work, if the devices had been taken to them in the Court, they would have done in a jiffy.

The staff attached to me / to my court made their own kind of sacrifices. They made space available in their homes, to call out cases continuously, be on the telephone with the advocates and take dictation at all hours of the day. We, as Judges are provided with houses with home offices from where, without disturbing the family, we could hold the court hearings or give dictation or virtually correct the orders with the staff members. However the homes from where the staff was functioning, did not have the said luxury. The same resulted in the said staff members telling their children, spouses and family members to, while they were virtually connected to the court or taking dictation, bring the activities in their homes to a standstill, I am sure much to the inconvenience of family members particularly the children.

Friends, there is another invisible support section in the court, contribution whereof also invariably remains to be acknowledged. This Section is the Law Researchers provided to each of the Judges. The said Law Researchers work as many hours and invariably more, than the Judges, continuing their research on legal propositions beyond the court hours. I was fortunate that in the year 2008 when I joined the Bench, a provision was made for each Judge to have a Law Researcher to assist him/her. As the work of the Law Researchers and their contribution in the functioning of the Judges was recognized, this number was increased first to two and now for some time past, to three. Without the presence of the said Law Researchers, to proof read the orders / judgments with reference to the files and to carry out legal research on propositions of law which arise during the hearing and in the making of a judgment or order, I as a Judge would have been unable to render the quality or quantity which I strived for.

Having acknowledged the huge role played by the staff members and the Law Researchers in the functioning of a Judge, I, with great humility accept all the praises showered today, for myself and as a messenger for the entire staff including those attached to me and the Law Researchers who have worked with me over the years.

A very big thanks to the entire staff of this Court and to the said Law Researchers. I have enjoyed being a Judge of this Court. My enjoyment is evident from the fact that unlike some of my colleagues who were rendered oath as a permanent Judge of this court the very first time, I was administered the oath as a temporary Judge of this court twice, before I was administered the oath as a permanent Judge of this court. So before I became a permanent Judge, I twice had option to quit with liberty to join back as a lawyer in this court.

However I was enjoying being a Judge so much that the thought did not even cross my mind.

Thank you once again for all the praises and for allowing me to work as a Judge as I thought a Judge should.