

TRIBUTE TO LATE MR. JUSTICE R.S. NARULA, FULL COURT
REFERENCE - JULY 7TH 2005

MY LORD CHIEF JUSTICE, YOUR LORDSHIPS, MR. P.P. MALHOTRA ADDITIONAL SOLICITOR GENERAL OF INDIA, STANDING COUNSEL FOR GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI, OFFICE BEARERS OF DELHI HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION AND OTHER BAR ASSOCIATIONS, RESPECTED SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE BAR, MY COLLEAGUES AT THE BAR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Today, I stand before you, together with you, to pay homage to a noble soul, who is known to one and all as Justice R.S. Narula. Narula Saheb left for his heavenly abode on June 1, leaving few months to complete his 90th birthday. I had the privilege of having a very affectionate relationship with him, personally and professionally. I had the privilege of staying in the same locality, practicing in the same court with him and more than that, enjoyed the liberty to approach him any time, with any doubt. Be it a law point or a doubt regarding Gurbani, he was there as a guide. With his demise, I have lost a guide and teacher in my life, professionally and spiritually.

Born in Layalpur District, now in Pakistan, Narula Saheb graduated in law from Punjab University, Lahore, when he was 22 and a year later, entered the profession. From then onwards, his march was steadfast. He holds the

distinction of one of those lawyers who had been in the Supreme Court right from its inception. His essay, contributed to the compendium brought out to commemorate fifty years of the Indian Supreme Court stands testimony to this.

Designated a Senior Advocate in 1961, Narula Saheb was elevated from the Bar to the Bench in April 1965, and then as Chief Justice of Punjab & Haryana High Court in 1974.

Justice Narula was a gentleman judge; his times on the High Court Bench wore still civil times; when the rough and tumble of Indian politics was held within bounds of civilized conversation amongst men and women in power. In this zodiac, he was able to lead judicial process to triumphant heights. Yet, poignantly, he continued to believe that the judiciary can remain even in changed times, marked by crisis of civility and death of dialogue, an oasis in the desert. Possessing an unsurpassed grasp of comparative jurisprudence, he wore his learning lightly. His disdain for purple judicial prose arose out of mastery of judicial style. He knew the inner logic of judicial craftsmanship; he addressed the future of law through the idiom of the present. Justice Narula's vision of judicial power and process helped shape the practices of the Bench and the Bar. One believes that ultimately it is the human quality of every Judge, which

shapes the image of judiciary and consequently legal system. The permanent foot prints left by great and noble souls like Justice Narula are bound to be the proud part of the legal history. Whether we would be able to continue and maintain these footprints today is a moot question which remains to be answered ? Upon his demise, it would require a steadfast project of a memory and tradition to pursue his articulate vision of judicial power and process.

Justice Narula had great faith in the members of the Bar. Bar was his first habitat and commitment. He was a firm supporter of the independence of the Bar. He often said that the Bench and Bar are but the two branches of the same 'life giving tree'. Their growth is inter-dependent. The importance of lawyers in the matter of administration of justice cannot be over-emphasized, he always claimed.

It was when he resumed his practice after retirement in 1977 that my interaction with him grew large. Assisting him, once I prepared a plaint alongwith the documents which ran into about two hundred pages. Within the next twenty four hours, the plaint came back with scribbles on the margin, grammatical and spelling mistakes encircled in red color. 'Attend to every detail' was his constant advice. I was astonished at his patience to go through each line and the speed with which he did that.

The lessons I learned from him stand in good stead even now and will always be.

Each person who came into contact with him witnessed his scholarly and professional attitude to his work. Professional to a point of exactitude which few people are aware even exists; for Narula Sahebji it was his everyday, normal standard Meticulous while lighthearted, ever ready with an appropriate quip to lighten a mood; knowledgeable while ever acquiring, he was a thinker who flattened obstacles before others could ever recognize them. The power of patience, the art of listening, the skill of understanding, pondering and the will to practice were bestowed upon him in abundant measure.

It gives me an air of prestige that he too was the President of the Delhi High Court Bar Association once, in which capacity I too have the fortune of today. But there is a major difference - he was simultaneously the Chairman of Bar Council of Delhi too; a distinction only he had has so far.

It would not be possible for me to mention the membership of associations he possessed and the awards and distinctions bestowed upon him as they are many - from the prestigious "Living Legend of Law", "Shiromani Award" to many more, including a Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa).

Widely traveled in India and abroad, he was known for his lectures as well.

Eminent Judges like Justice Yogeshwar Dayal and Justice S.S. Chadha had their foundation of advocacy laid in the chambers of Narula Saheb. Justice Prakash Narain and Justice H.R. Anand of Hon'ble Delhi High Court were frequently seen briefing Narula Saheb. The Bar has a distinction of having amongst its members many eminent Senior Advocates who got their training and were associated with him.

Narula Saheb was a combination of a great lawyer, a great advocate and a great judge. Apart from that shines, the qualities of a fine human being, an excellent academician, and a dedicated social worker. He laid the canvas of ideals and values, virtues and wisdom. He had drawn the path of traditions and spirit, challenges and milestones. He had coloured the vision of believer and achiever, a seeker and a leader. The greatest tribute to him would be to resolve to live by his dreams and his canvas.

Narula Saheb was closely associated with various religious, educational, cultural and charitable societies and trusts. He truly believed and practiced that 'whatever your left hand does, need not be known to the right hand.' He, almost single handedly, brought up a School popularly known as 'Sardani Sada Kaur Girls Higher Secondary School,' which has

the distinction of having more Muslim girls than any other school in the vicinity. Being a deeply religious man he believed in basic ideology of all religions of the world. He was Chairman of Rama Krishan Mission Ashram, Vice President of Gandhi Marg at Chandigarh and played an active role in disseminating the Gandhian Philosophy of truth and Non-violence.

His intellect, righteousness, spirituality and compassion were invaluable. I think it was in 1988 winter one received a letter from him which started something like "After having spent years both at the Bench and Bar, it is time for me to call it a day." And really he did so.

Narula Saheb was truly a Gursikh. I distinctly remember him saying "there are indeed very few Sikhs anywhere in the world today and the rest of us just look like Sikhs or merely profess to be Sikhs." He walked the way of a true Sikh, without fear or worries. With a twinkle in his eyes, he would then stroke the long snowwhite beard. He was always prepared for the end and was happily transcending all levels to reach 'Gobind Milan'.

Justice S.S. Chadha, his son-in-law adorned the Bench of Delhi High Court. We have Deepjot his son and two grandsons, Amit and Angad, amongst us. I personally do not like to use the word condolence or sorrow when I

remember Narula Saheb. Justice Chadha's, Deepjot's, Amit's and Angad's loss is irreparable. Our hearts are with them.

Narula Saheb's mortal remains are not here. But he will never fade. His vision would continue to guide us; his words would continue to encourage us; his deeds would continue to inspire us; his achievements would continue to motivate us and his presence would continue to surround us.

May his soul rest in peace.

AMARJIT SINGH CHANDHIOK
President

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