

Hon'ble the Acting Chief Justice Ms. Geeta Mittal

My esteemed brother and sister colleagues,

Smt. Maninder Acharya, Additional Solicitor General of India,

Shri. Kirti Uppal, President, Delhi High Court Bar Association,

Shri. J.P. Sengh, Vice President, Delhi High Court Bar Association,

Sh. Amit Sharma, Honorary Secretary, Delhi High Court Bar Association,

Sh. Ramesh Singh, Standing Counsel (Civil), Govt. of NCT Delhi,

Sh. Rahul Mehra, Standing Counsel (Criminal), Govt. of NCT Delhi

Other Standing Counsels of the Central and State Government,

Executive Members of the Delhi High Court Bar Association,

Presidents, Secretary & Office Bearers of all Bar Associations of Delhi,

Presidents, Secretary & Office Bearers of Bar Council of Delhi,

Senior Advocates,

Learned Members of the Bar, Law Researchers and everyone present.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namashkar

I feel humbled and honoured by the kind words spoken about me.

Today seems **like no other day**, yet it is like **no other day**. Today marks the culmination of my 38 years of serving our constitution and its people. In doing so, I have been joyous, moved, humbled, intrigued, challenged, appreciated ... but was never doubtful. I owe this surety of thought & action, to my mentors, seniors, family and well-wishers.

Back in 1980, when I cleared, my DJS exam, and became an Officer of Delhi District Courts, I like any other young person carried the dream of doing well. But no dream is ever chased alone. As I look back, as one does at such a time, I have many people to thank, for supporting me, teaching me and believing in me.

I express my gratitude to Hon'ble Mr. Justice A.P. Shah, the then Chief Justice of this Court, who in the year 2009 put faith in my judicial and administrative capabilities and honoured me with the privilege to preside over the First Family Court in Delhi as a Principal Judge.

I would be failing in my duties if I do not thank Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India, Sh. Deepak Mishra, for being a pillar of strength and support during the set up and expansion of The Family Court Institution in Delhi. I was fortunate to be working under your lordship's leadership and guidance during that time when he was serving as the Chief Justice of this Court.

I also thank Hon'ble Mr. Justice Madan B Lokur, Judge, Supreme Court of India, for giving me opportunity and arena to utilise my passion for mediation.

I am grateful to Hon'ble Mr. Justice A.K. Sikri, Judge Supreme Court of India, who as a Acting Chief Justice of this Court, acknowledged my capabilities and proposed my name for the High Court Judgeship.

I also thank Ms. Aruna Suresh, the Retired Judge of this Court and who I lovingly call 'didi' for being just that - an elder sister.

I want to show my appreciation to my brother and sister colleagues. You have been my true allys and have always showered me with much love and affection. I also thank my Senior Bench Partners for being my sounding board

and for respecting my point of view. It has been a privilege working by your side.

The 33 years I spent in District Courts has given me not just colleagues but true friends. I thank Mr. A.S. Yadav, Mr. M. K. Gupta, Retired District & Sessions Judges and Mr. R.K. Gauba, now the Hon'ble Judge of this Court, for standing by me in good times & bad.

I would also like to thank my staff, Law Officers, interns who have constantly worked with me and have helped me in performing my duties more efficiently.

I also thank the Registry of this Court, including Protocol, P&P and the Medical and the Staff of Judges Lounge.

I take with me wonderful memories and strong friendships, that is a great gift to have.

As a Judge, the most difficult thing is, to let go of, one's own, sense of justice to the authority of the legal order. Many a times, I have battled and won over my own biases. My greatest personal success has been to overcome all external & internal hurdles in order to uphold my duties towards my Office. This strength was sown and nurtured in me, by my loving parents, who I deeply miss. I owe not just my life but also 'my whole judicial Life' to my mother, Ms. Shiromani Gupta. She single-handedly ensured that I received the right education despite my gender and the negative societal pressures. She is my true hero who brought me up to be a God fearing, self-righteous and fair-minded person. From my father, I have inherited strong work ethics, moral integrity, a

deep sense of empathy, the virtue of patience and self-discipline. I can never thank them enough for making me the person I am.

The images of my grandmother I carry from my childhood also gives me the strength and courage to fight adversaries, boldly and with the attitude “never say.....never.” I thank her for being my grandmother.

I feel blessed, to have been loved by the kindest, most intelligent man I have ever known - My late husband - Cdr. Shrikant Sharma. Shri always encouraged me to be a strong women in a man’s world. He inspired me to be a better version of myself. Even though he is not here today, I would still like to thank him for his unconditional affection and care. He was and still is my - “...friend, philosopher & guide.”

My life is made richer every moment by my children - Lohit & Himadri , my son-in-law, Amit and my most precious Little Yohan. Looking at them grow and change gives me deep meaning and a sense of fulfilment. A working mother all my life, I was always laden with the guilt of not being able to spend too much time with my children. But they taught me to value quality over quantity. Their boundless love and honest smiles melt away all my guilt and hardships. I thank them for looking after me and sharing their time and lives with me.

I am blessed to have my younger brothers – Shri. Anil Gupta & Dr. Atul Gupta and younger sister Dr. Babita Gupta, here with me. They have achieved so much in their lives and I feel really proud to be their big sister. Together we have shared happy and carefree days of our childhood, youth and now our senior years. I thank them for their love and respect.

In the journey of your life, you often meet strangers and some of them become part of your family for their concern and unconditional love for you. I thank big brother Sh. Chaudhry and his family for being there whenever I need them.

Talking about my family's contribution to my life also reminds me of the years that I spent building and nurturing the Family Courts in Delhi. Like a Family works together for communal benefit, so does The Law. I have always looked at law not merely as cases or files, but as human stories. Today, I want to narrate one such story. During my time at the Family Courts, a man was in jail for the last 8 years on account of non-payment of maintenance support to his wife & child. Due to issues related to money, he had been separated from his wife for 14 years and had never met his son who was born in his nana's house. The lawyers were rightly arguing the law about keeping him in jail, but the argument in my mind was, how to bring justice to him and his estranged family? Having pondered over it for a few days, I invited his wife and now teenage son to the next proceedings. The father and the son did not recognise each other, they were complete strangers although tied by same genetic code, but when, on the instigation of the court, the son touched his father's feet, a flood of human emotions overpowered the courtroom . All three - the father, wife and son hugged tight and cried. All of their egos, worries, fears - seemed to have just melted away in that moment. The family got united just like other hundreds of families that we helped unite at the Family Courts.

And that's the true purpose of Law - Not just to rule according to the established authority or customs, but to constantly look beyond to serve and benefit our society. I would like to quote Robert Kennedy here – “The glory of justice and the majesty of law are created not just by the Constitution - nor by the courts - nor by the officers of the law - nor by the lawyers - but by the men

and women who constitute our society.” And so my approach has always been to serve with passion & dignity and to uphold the spirit of the Law not simply the Law.

Today marks the end on an era, but it also marks the start of a new one. I thank everyone for being a part of my journey and hope that you are with me on the road that lies ahead. Thank you once again for this special ceremony and for all of your time and attention.

Thanks