

Speech for the Condolence Meeting in memory of Hon'ble Mr.

Justice A.R. Lakshmanan

1. Brother and Sister Judges, Advocate General, President of the Bar Association, Chairman, Bar Council of Tamil Nadu, members of the legal fraternity, ladies and gentlemen, and all the family members of Justice Lakshmanan,

2. It is with a deep sense of sorrow that we have come to condole the passing away of Hon'ble Mr. Justice A.R. Lakshmanan, former Judge, Supreme Court of India and a towering personality in the Indian judiciary from Tamil Nadu State, who left for the heavenly abode on 27th August, 2020 at his native place in Devakottai. He leaves behind him a legacy of qualities of a great jurist.

3. Justice Lakshmanan was born on 22nd March 1942, in Devakottai, Sivaganga District, Tamil Nadu. After successfully graduating in Economics from St. Joseph's College, Trichy, he decided to pursue the law from Madras Law College. In the year 1966, after completing his Bachelor of Law degree, he started his legal career by assisting some of the most prominent seniors of the bar.

4. Justice Lakshmanan, being a first-generation lawyer, himself admitted to struggling initially in order to survive in the profession. After practising as a lawyer for over 23 years, as a result of his sheer hardwork, he was appointed as a Permanent Judge of the Madras High Court in 1990. Justice Lakshmanan excelled as a Judge and during his tenure in Kerala High Court, he was appointed as acting Chief Justice on 3 occasions. He became Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court and also served as Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Thereafter, he was elevated as a Judge of the Supreme Court in the year 2002. He served the Supreme Court of India for five years before retiring in 2007.

5. During his tenure in the Supreme Court, he contributed more than 200 judgments touching upon wide-ranging issues, including that of taxation, management of religious institutions, service matters, labour laws and employee welfare, and many more. During his tenure in the Supreme Court, he was a part of several constitution benches.

6. After his retirement, he was appointed as the Chairman of the 18th Law Commission of India. After undertaking the long journey from an advocate to a judge, he firmly believed that the justice delivery system needs to be improved. In a short span of 2

years, he reflected upon the entire state of affairs of the India legal system and the necessity of implementing changes. He submitted 32 comprehensive reports to the Government of India recommending various measures to improve the Judicial System in India. He contributed immensely to the development of Family Law jurisprudence through various reports during his Chairmanship.

7. Throughout his life, he wore multiple hats. One such hat was that of an educationist. He was committed to the cause of improving the quality of legal education in India. His endeavour was to enrich the young minds to pursue a profession of excellence and commitment. He has served as Chancellor of the National Law University of Jodhpur, and of NALSAR, Hyderabad, which are renowned centres of legal education in the country.

8. As a testament to his knowledge and learning, he has authored several works in Tamil and English. His books provide a deep insight into years of experience, his depth of knowledge and his unending wisdom. His life and times are bound to be remembered again, and will certainly inspire generations to come.

9. The greatest strength of the judiciary is the faith of people in it. Faith, confidence and acceptability cannot be commanded, they have to be earned. I believe Justice Lakshmanan epitomized all the required qualities of being one of the best judges this country has seen. At this instance, I am reminded of a quote by Thiruvalluvar:

<TAMIL QUOTE>

10. Life is an opportunity to be an example to others, by setting exemplary standards. He followed this quote.

11. There are innumerable qualities that a person needs to live what can be called a good life: humility, patience, kindness, a strong work ethic and the enthusiasm to constantly learn and improve oneself. Most importantly, particularly for a judge, one must be steadfast in holding on to their principles and fearless in their decisions. It is an important quality for a judge to withstand all pressures and odds and to stand up bravely against all obstacles. Here I am reminded of a few words of a saint, who while speaking about the contemporary significance of Lord Rama, said the following words:

“So people worship Rama not because of the success in his life, but for the gracefulness

with which he conducted the most difficult moments.

That is what is valued;

that is the highest value in one's life.

It is not the question of how much you have,

what you did,

what happened or

what did not happen.

Whatever happened, how did you conduct yourself?

That is what determines the quality of who you are.”

12. Our values are ultimately our greatest wealth, and we must never forget the same. Justice Lakshmanan wore his values on his sleeves, and I learnt immensely from him, about being a good person and a judge.

13. Justice Lakshmanan was very close to my heart. I had attended his 60th Birthday celebrations in Devakottai. I will never forget his affection and concern towards me. I must admit, he was a very good host.

14. One of the great qualities of Justice Lakshmanan was that he never forgot his friends and companions, like a true leader he always took care of everybody. When I was a young judge, we would often attend informal meetings together. It was during these times that he would very proudly share stories of the ancient Tamil heritage and traditions. He was an individual who was very closely connected with his birth place, culture and language. Often, with pride he used to recollect the rich Tamil architecture and Chettinad culture and cuisine. He was indeed a proud Tamilian and had close connections with his roots.

15. Before I end, I would like to recollect some words of Justice Lakshmanan himself, which we as judges must remember and cherish ***“we, the members of the judicial hierarchy have inherited the legacy of dedicated collective endeavour by the bench and the bar in establishing an unbroken tradition of high efficiency, perfect integrity and fearless independence.”***

16. We should all take inspiration from his words and should strive to commit a vibrant and independent judiciary which is required in the current times.

17. I feel that the biggest quality of a good human being is that we do not need to remember them but they remain alive in our memories. Justice Lakshmanan has left the world by making a mark in the lives of thousands of people and always remains to be there in our memory. Justice Lakshmanan, enjoyed abundance of goodwill and affection from every member of the bar and the bench. He truly believed that, with sheer hard work and a heart filled with humility, you can achieve greatness. His life is an inspiration for the young generation during these times.

18. On my behalf I express and place on record a deep sense of gratitude for His Lordship's contribution to the Indian judiciary and extend my deepest condolences for the loss. I would also like to pay my tribute to Mrs. Meenakshi Aachi, Justice Lakshmanan's loving wife. She took up the responsibility for the well-being of everyone in her joint family, and was a loving and caring mother. She will be remembered fondly by all her family and acquaintances.

19. I pay my respectful homage to the departed souls. I pray to God to give strength and courage to the family members. May their soul rest in peace.