

FAREWELL SPEECH OF HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

- Sister and Brother Judges;
 - Former Judges;
 - Law Officers of Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh;
 - Assistant Solicitor Generals of India, J&K and Ladakh;
 - Law officer of Government of India and Executives of Bar Association;
 - Members of Bar of Union Territories.
 - Members of Staff;
 - Ladies & Gentlemen;
 - Friends who have joined this function.
1. Lincoln once said that the best thing about the future was that it came one day at a time. The day has arrived when I have to thank this institution and all of you for the valuable contribution each one of you has made to my professional and personal life.
 2. I had neither any ambition nor expectation that a person like me could ever be considered for judgeship. I thoroughly loved my

work as a lawyer which evolved with time. I was rendered speechless when on a cold morning of December 2000, I was invited to the Bench by Chief Justice Arijit Pasayat. I least expected to be a Chief Justice of a Court as important as High Court of Jammu and Kashmir.

3. My life experiences have shown that whenever God closes even one window, he literally opens the palace doors for you. Just as He had done for me when he commanded that my place rested in the now Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
4. I arrived here with the hope to build a bridge of equity between the courts at Delhi and in J&K. During my time as the Chief Justice here, I have tried to embed the abounding spirit of inclusion, equality, non-discrimination and justice in our courts.
5. Towards this end, I strived to inculcate judicious bonding, sharing the values of judicial discipline, honesty, ethics and confidence in the justice dispensation system.
6. I was told that as I took over as a woman Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir High Court, I was breaking a glass ceiling and making

history; As a woman, I have constantly questioned myself about the glass ceiling – as to whether I have ever managed to break it? However, life has taught me that the ‘*glass ceiling*’ is not about arriving at a position – getting a law degree, becoming a lawyer, getting appointed as a judge or even as a Chief Justice. Glass ceilings are broken when you start making a real difference to whatever you do, when you uplift others behind you and empower them to stand as tall as you do, when you enable them to stride ahead of you. So, my dear friends, in this, I have only just begun – I have really miles to go before I sleep.

7. It is this spirit with which I had come to all of you and I hope I have succeeded in achieving some of its aspirations.
8. The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir is unique, it is incomparable and in many ways, inimitable. It is located as two beautiful wings, which are certainly not present in any other High Court or in the same format.
9. I am grateful to the Almighty for giving me this blessing of being able to contribute in some manner to this court while sharing my

experiences both as a lawyer and as a Judge of the Delhi High Court.

10. I have no hesitation in acknowledging that it has been a gratifying and cherishable experience to be here. The credit goes to the judges of the various courts who so unhesitatingly have assisted in the changes and adaptations, bearing my impatience because of my anxiety to do much in the little time that I had. The credit for any achievement certainly goes to all. My initial apprehensions have melted into insignificance.
11. For all of us in the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, these have been undoubtedly trying times. I must acknowledge the encouragement that I received because not one of you have complained of fatigue or annoyance. None of you have ever said that "*our style is better than yours*" or "*what exists is good enough*". The very fact that you have permitted, facilitated and encouraged the changes, welcomed the adaptations and new ideas shows the desire all of you have of qualitatively adding to justice dispensation.

12. The Judicial Staff in the Registry and the Staff of the High Court in Both the Wings especially my personal staff, have treated me with kindness and have been tolerant enough to bear the brunt of my impatience. I am sure as part of being one family, it is forgotten.
13. I must acknowledge that I could have done nothing but for the pillars of this court. Our present Registrar General, Mr. Jawad Ahmed; has served me 24 x 7 since my appointment in August 2018 till date, firstly as Principal Private Secretary and then as Registrar General. Jawad has unique and unmatched qualities which, in my long 16 years of experience I have not come across in any other person. His ability of working hard is unmatched. His humility; his unflappable patience; his humanity; his respectful demeanour irrespective of standing and status of the person with whom he is dealing with; his affection for humanity in general, concern for the weak; his commitment to fairness; and his honesty is something that make him a real asset to the judiciary of Jammu and Kashmir.

14. Both Masarat Shaheen and Sonia Gupta have done well in their avatars as Registrar Judicials. They have both faced bursts of my impatience with aplomb. They have had to make the largest adaptations but they have done well simultaneously. To them I express my heart felt gratitude.
15. The entire IT team lead by Shahzad Azeem, Malik Shabeer Ahmad and Umesh Sharma has grown leaps and bounds in difficult circumstances and I compliment them for their many many achievements. I know I have been pushing them hard but they have happily persevered.
16. Masrat Ruhi a new comer has jumped into every initiative with such alacrity. I compliment her for her sincerity, hard work and desire to work out good ideas.
17. It would have been impossible to discharge my duties at the High Court without the security of having all needs looked after by Mehraj-ud-Din and Arvind Sharma, the Registrar Protocols.
18. In my anxiety and eagerness to achieve too much in too little time, I have driven everybody beyond their limits. The elastic which has

stretched without limits and is being pulled even today is Mr. Rajeev Gupta. Rajiv does not bat an eyelid with every new responsibility under his leadership. As the Director of the Jammu and Kashmir State Judicial Academy, the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir is receiving international and national acknowledgement as a Court of Importance. I am sure he will radiate the same vibrance as the new Principal Private Secretary to the Chief Justice,

19. I thank each one of these talented officers. I can proudly claim that the reputation landmarks that the Jammu and Kashmir High Court have achieved is not only because of its talented judges and judiciary but because of its hard working and abled registry.
20. The sincerity and commitment with which Tilak Raj Sharma, Sunita Koul, Raj Kumar from Jammu Wing and Syed Tasaduq Qadri, Abdul Qayoom, Yasmeen, Mohd Altaf from Srinagar Wing have discharged their work is way beyond the call of ordinary duties. They gave me the opportunity of calling upon them in late into the night, often dictating even on the phone and responded to

my impositions on their time early in the morning in the cold winter in Srinagar. My entire judicial work has rested on their contribution to my efforts.

21. A special word for my usher Mangat Ram, his loyalty, responsiveness and honesty is unmatched. He is truly an example to emulate.
22. A special word for Nazia Chauhan my Bench Secretary. Educated as a lawyer, her ability, honesty, concern and generosity of spirit with every facet of my work and life is something which I will truly cherish.

I will fail in my duty if I do not acknowledge the work and contribution of the staff in the registry- the Darbar move staff. The work of a retired court staff, Sham Lal.

23. There has been much that I have been able to achieve because of the assistance of Sat Pal (Restorer), Javed, Rashid Ganie, Bir Bahadur Singh, Bansi & Rashid Mughal (Orderlies).

The invaluable contribution to my work and life of quiet and committed soul, my backbone Rakesh Sharma.

24. As I leave all you I am compelled to ponder on all that I gained and learned here.
25. I have personally and professionally grown leaps and bounds with every passing day. From my Brothers and Sisters on the Bench to the members of the Bar who have appeared before me; from the several litigants in my court to the understanding members of the Registry as well as my law researchers who gave me such energetic and enthusiastic assistance all throughout, I am deeply grateful for all your love and untiring support.
26. Where will I find
- The unique amalgamation of IT and legal expertise as that of Brother Bindal;
 - The punctuality, expeditiousness in administration and judicial decision making and positive concern for the institution as that of Brother Magrey;
 - The unmatched gentlemanness, grace, caution, commitment and erudition of Brother Thakur;

- The gentility, simplicity and sincerity of Brother Tashi Rabstan;
- The hard work and unflinching dedication to justice dispensation; institutional concern for the institution and the community; and the unflappable sense of humour of Brother Sanjeev Kumar;
- The grace, literary skills and clarity in her judgment of Sister Sindhu Sharma;
- The joy in work; smiles, the concern with disposal and gentlemanness of Brothers Rajnesh Oswal and V. C. Koul;
- The commitment, frankness; clear headedness, discipline and punctuality of Brother Sanjay Dhar;
- The manifestation of the adage that still waters run deep; that the sure and steady wins the race as that of Brother Puneet Gupta;
- The breath of fresh air and enthusiasm as brought by Brother Javed Iqbal Wani.

27. The Jammu and Kashmir Judiciary has responded instantly to many demands in difficult times- I commend them for their dedication.
28. I must thank the members of the Bar for the assistance which they have given me. There has been much on which we have differed. But then it is said, '*institutions can grow only if there is dissent.*' Often, we have to agree to disagree. My request to our friends in the Bar is that we must endeavour to serve society by using ethical means. Remember that "No success or achievement in material terms is worthwhile unless it serves the needs or interest of the country and its people and is achieved by fair and honest means".
29. Members of Bar here match the best in the country and I look forward to continued engagement with them.
30. As I end my work as a judge, my refrain that nothing can match the glory of a lawyer who is heard and makes a difference – stand only reinforced.

31. I have attempted to do the best I can for the benefit and upliftment of the people of the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, and especially for those groups who are oblivious of the guarantees that the glorious Constitution of this country affords to them. I have faith that my Sister and Brother Judges will continue the crusade.
32. My father once told me that as a judge, I have no choice – I have to follow the law. I remind myself of these words day in and day out.
33. In the words of Douglas Mac Arthur – *“A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.”*
34. I thank the Almighty for sending me to this heaven on earth with such talented and beautiful people and for this opportunity to share with the judiciary of Jammu and Kashmir and its people the achievements, best practices and the experiences of the Delhi High Court and my life.

35. I would end my address with a beautiful observation by Charles Dickens.- "*We forge the chains we wear in life.*" I will therefore, of my own accord want to remain attached to this institution and the people of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh as long as my journey on this Earth continues.