

Mr. Attorney, Mr. President,

I accept with gratitude the warm welcome and the kind sentiments expressed by you in welcoming me as a Judge of the Court of Appeal. I also wish to thank all those who are present here, especially as this ceremonial sitting was arranged at a time when there is an outbreak of an epidemic in the country.

Hailing from Hikkaduwa in the Southern Province, I started my practice under the guidance of late Mr. N.R.M. Daluwatta P.C. and was his junior for six years. I value, cherish and am eternally indebted to him for the grounding and training that I received from him during the short period I practiced at Hulftsdorp.

After Joining the judiciary in June 1994, I have served mainly in outstations in various parts of the country including in the Eastern Province. I have served mainly in Civil Courts, both in the original Civil Courts as well as in Civil Appellate Courts.

A common problem that I have observed is laws' delays which is often discussed in the Judicial Circles. As all of us here are aware, it is due to various reasons.

I have come across many partition actions pending in the District Courts for more than 20 to 25 years. It is my view that the Judges in the Minor Judiciary can play a very important role in resolving such disputes within

the framework of the law. The methods of alternate dispute resolution should be improved. The lawyers have a very important role to play in settling cases. Free Legal Aid should be provided for the poor.

I have delivered justice without any fear or favor wherever I have served and I wish to thank both the official and unofficial bar for the co-operation extended to me to dispense justice without undue delay in my career of 27 years in the Judiciary.

I remember with affection and gratitude my family members who have supported and encouraged me to be who I am today.

My mother and father would have been very happy and proud today if they were amongst us, so would my only brother who has passed away. My elder sister would have loved to be here on this very special occasion. She is unable to be present here due to unavoidable circumstances, but I know she is here with me in spirit.

I also wish to thank my two nephews who are present here for the encouragement, assistance and support they have given me to pursue my career without any hindrance. I wish to thank my younger sister, my cousin sister and my sister-in-law who are present here today.

I also wish to thank and remember all those in my professional life who have guided, encouraged and helped me in numerous ways to achieve my goals and ambitions. I remember with gratitude the former Chief Justice Mr. G.P.S. De Silva, Late Justice K.M.M.B. Kulatunga, Late Justice J.F.A. Soza and Justice T.B. Weerasooriya.

I would like to mention that I am blessed and privileged to share the bench of this court with Hon. Justice Devika Abeyratne who is not only a dear colleague but a childhood friend as well, as our families have a special relationship that run into generations.

I also remember my brother Justice Gurusinghe who was my A.D.J. at Matara for the longstanding friendship, support and inspiration I received from him.

I also remember my colleagues at the bar at Hulftsdorp including Mr. Justice Prasantha De Silva and High Court Judges Azaan Marikkar and Frank Gunawardhena.

I am deeply indebted to my Almar Mater – Dharmashoka College Ambalangoda where I received my formative education and I am indebted to my teachers there and in my village school for the discipline and moral values that were inculcated in me.

I thank all of you once again for your presence, for all your good wishes, for welcoming me and for making this occasion a memorable one for me.

Thank you!