

**Exploring Contemporary Challenges and Innovations
across diverse fields of Law**

Ramanathan Kanan, Judge of the Civil Appellate High Court of Jaffna, Vice Chancellor of the University of Jaffna, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Head of the Department of Law, distinguished academics, the editorial board, members of the Law Students' Society, invited guests, and my dear students,

It is with great honour that I stand before you today at the official launch of *Neetham* Law Journal, Volume IX. I wish to begin by extending my heartfelt gratitude to the Department of Law and the Editorial Board of the Law Students' Society of the University of Jaffna for graciously inviting me to be part of this significant occasion. It is truly humbling to witness the passion, dedication, and intellectual curiosity that have shaped this journal into the distinguished publication it has become.

I must especially commend the faculty, the students, and the entire editorial board for the tireless effort you have invested in bringing this volume to life. A student-led legal journal is not an easy undertaking. It requires vision, commitment, and the ability to work as a cohesive academic community. Your success is a

testament to your resilience and your shared belief in the transformative power of legal scholarship.

As I reflect on the theme of this year's journal "*Exploring Contemporary Challenges and Innovations across Diverse Fields of Law*", I am reminded of the profound responsibility that rests upon your generation of lawyers. We are living in an era where the law is being tested by new forces: technology that outpaces regulation, climate change that demands global cooperation, constitutional questions that shake the foundations of governance, and social movements that compel us to confront long-standing injustices.

The questions you will face as future lawyers will rarely have simple answers. The landscape you are preparing to enter is not one where you will find a neatly written rule for every situation. More often, you will be called to exercise judgment, to weigh competing rights, and to find principled solutions to novel problems.

And this, I believe, is where the true value of *Neetham* lies. It is not just a collection of articles, it is a training ground for critical thought. It is a space where young legal minds can engage with difficult questions, challenge assumptions, and cultivate the habit of intellectual courage. You are learning not merely to understand the law, but to question it, to develop it, and ultimately, to humanise it.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some personal reflections, lessons that I believe are invaluable as you embark on your journey through the legal profession.

First, never lose your curiosity.

The law is not static. It evolves with society, and the moment you assume you have mastered it is the moment you stop growing. You must approach the law as a lifelong student. Even at the highest bench, I continue to read, to question, and to learn from my former Seniors, colleagues, even from young practitioners, and from the shifting realities of the world around us.

The journals you write, the cases you study, the clients you will one day represent, each will teach you something new if you remain open to learning. Stay curious. Stay engaged. The learning process will never end.

Most Importantly understand that law is not just about rules, it is about people.

When we speak of constitutional rights, contractual obligations, or criminal statutes, we are not dealing with abstract ideas. We are dealing with human lives, with their hopes, their struggles, and their dignity. Always remember that behind every brief, behind every

case file, is a person whose life may be changed by the work you do.

When you stand before a Court of Law or when you draft a piece of legislation or pleadings, do not see only the technicality, see the humanity. Law that loses sight of people becomes cold, mechanical, and ultimately unjust.

Embrace constructive criticism with Grace.

One of the most valuable lessons you can learn early in your legal journey is to welcome feedback, especially from those who have walked the path before you. When senior lawyers, judges, or academics offer you guidance or point out areas for improvement, see it not as a personal attack or criticism, but as a gift. Every piece of constructive criticism is an opportunity to sharpen your thinking, refine your skills, grow in your profession and develop your personality.

In the legal field, you will inevitably face scrutiny. How you receive it will often define your progress. A good lawyer is not one who never makes mistakes, but one who is willing to learn from them. Carry yourself with humility and resilience. Seek out mentors, listen actively to their advice, and even when you may initially disagree, reflect deeply. Sometimes, the advice we resist the most holds the greatest wisdom. Your openness to

learning, even in difficult moments, will shape you into not just a competent lawyer, but a respected one. Even judgments of courts will be changed by decisions of higher courts, even turned down. Sentences imposed by lower courts also might be reduced after considering factors such as circumstances, culpability and other relevant factors. Merely because of that does not mean that Lower Court judgments are wrong.

Develop your ethical compass early and be Genuine.

The pressures of practice, the complexities of modern law, and even the realities of career advancement will test your values. Success will present you with choices, some easy, some difficult. In those moments, your ethical foundation will be your greatest guide.

Integrity is not negotiable. Your reputation as a lawyer will be built not only on your knowledge, but on your character. Choose always to act with honesty, with fairness, and with the courage to do what is right, even when it is not convenient.

Please do not lie to the Court. Doing so will leave a lasting mark against you, and once you lose the trust of the bench, it is extremely difficult to regain. If you encounter difficulties with your case, be honest and bring it to the attention of the Court. You may seek to withdraw or manage your case accordingly, but you must always remain genuine before the bench.

If you are dealing with a difficult or weak case, present it faithfully according to your brief and make a sincere effort to argue the best possible position within the framework of the law. It is often said, sometimes unfairly, that lawyers are liars. However, when members of the profession act dishonestly or disrespectfully towards the bench, they quickly earn a reputation as untrustworthy advocates. Guard your credibility fiercely. Always aim to be honest, respectful, and genuine in your conduct before the Court.

Appreciate the power of service.

Law is ultimately a profession of service, to your clients, to the courts, to the Constitution, and to society. It is not simply a means to personal advancement, but a tool through which you can contribute to building a more just, equitable, compassionate community and society at large.

The privilege of being a lawyer carries with it a profound responsibility. Use your skills to uplift others, to defend those whose voices are often unheard, and to protect the vulnerable. It is through this service that you will find the deepest fulfilment in your career.

My dear students, let me remind you that you are entering a profession that is demanding, but also deeply rewarding. You will face long hours, complex problems, and moments of uncertainty. But you will also have the

opportunity to shape lives, to influence the development of the law, and to stand at the frontlines of justice.

It is important to understand that obtaining your professional qualification is not the final milestone, it is only the beginning. Earning your degree and your professional title is a significant achievement, but it merely equips you with the foundation. The real learning begins in practice. The courtroom, the law firm, the government office, these are where you will truly develop as lawyers. Practical experience will teach you lessons that no textbook can, and it will shape the kind of professional you become.

The *Neetham* Law Journal is an extraordinary foundation upon which to build your future. By participating in this publication, you have already demonstrated that you are not passive recipients of knowledge, you are active contributors to the intellectual life of our country.

I would like to especially acknowledge the unique contribution that the Department of Law at the University of Jaffna continues to make to the legal landscape of Sri Lanka. The strength, perseverance, and academic excellence that emanate from this institution have enriched the diversity of our legal discourse. The perspectives shaped by the unique socio-cultural context of Jaffna are invaluable, and I

encourage you all to continue contributing boldly to national and international legal debates.

To the faculty members who have mentored and supported these students, I extend my deep appreciation. Your role in shaping thoughtful, principled, and capable lawyers cannot be overstated. Through your dedication, you ensure that our legal profession remains vibrant and committed to justice.

I also want to thank the Law Students' Society and the editorial board of *Neetham* for their outstanding work in curating this volume and for continuing the tradition of student-led academic excellence. Your initiative and leadership have created a platform that will inspire generations to come.

To each student here: whether you pursue a career in litigation, academia, public service, or another field, remember that the true measure of a lawyer is not the titles you earn or the victories you claim. It is the integrity with which you serve, the fairness with which you act, and the justice you strive to uphold.

As you embark on this journey, do not be afraid to challenge established norms. Do not hesitate to ask difficult questions. And most importantly, never stop believing in the power of the law to bring about meaningful change.

I am deeply honoured to share this moment with you. With the launch of *Neetham* Volume IX, let us all commit to continuous learning, to fearless inquiry, and to shaping a legal community that is as just as it is brilliant.

Thank you, and I wish each of you great success on your path ahead.