

Mr. Attorney, President of the Bar Association, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely grateful to you for this warm reception on this occasion of my appointment to the second highest temple of justice, and I am honored by your expression of confidence in me as a judicial officer. Indeed, it is a landmark in my judicial career. I will not take too much of your time as I extend my gratitude to the notable players in my journey here.

I joined the bar as a junior in 1987, having apprenticed under Mrs. Nalin Tilaka Herath in Nuwara Eliya.

I was privileged to serve in her chambers as a junior, which was undoubtedly instrumental in laying the preparatory groundwork for me to immerse myself in the legal profession. I express my heart-felt gratitude for her formative training and guidance.

I soon left Nuwara Eliya and commenced practicing in the Magistrates Court of Mawanella and the District Court of Kegalle. The help, guidance and assistance received from members of the Mawanella Bar while I was practicing in that station is still fresh in my memory.

Having enjoyed the privilege of being in the unofficial bar for a period of 7 years, I was called to serve as a judicial officer in the year 1994.

I was privileged to serve in the Magistrate's Court of Galgamuwa, District/Magistrate's Courts of Hatton and Pugoda, and the District Courts of Homagama, Panadura and Colombo.

I received my appointment to the Provincial High Court in 2011. Hence, I served as the High Court Judge of the Provincial Civil Appellate High Courts in Kurunegala, Matara, Ratnapura, the Provincial High Court of Colombo and thereafter, as a member of the first Permanent Trial at Bar and finally as the High Court Judge of the Commercial High Court in Colombo.

I am grateful to all the members of the Judicial Service Commission for the guidance, direction, and professional advancement I received during my career in the judiciary, as well as for offering me the opportunity to serve in different capacities and stations.

I wish to express my gratitude to St. Mary`s College Kegalle, where I received my primary education.

It is said that "Education is Discipline." I remember with great pleasure, my Alma Mater, St. Sylvester`s College, Kandy which has granted me just that: an education with discipline. I also remember all my teachers at St. Mary`s College and St. Sylvester`s College, to whom I am very grateful.

Though he is no longer with us, I cannot ever forget my late father, Mr. M. Wijeratne, who was my strength in life until his departure. He gave me all the guidance and sensibility I required to navigate society and all its complexities. My mother Mrs. Ratnayake Wijeratne, was everything in my childhood. She, being a teacher, was the driving force in my education. I am extremely thankful to both my parents.

My wife, Nishamini, having married me, had to make many sacrifices. She had to take responsibility in managing matters of our family as my profession often took me away from home while serving in different stations. She never complained in taking full responsibility of home, despite her being a medical officer attached to State Hospitals. I must express my gratitude to her for being my spirit in life, without whom, life would lose its colour.

I must thank my only brother, Asela, who shared my childhood with me who is today, living in Australia.

I will fail in my duty if I do not thank you, the members of the Colombo bar, for the corporation extended to me during my tenure of office as the District Judge of Colombo, Judge of the Provincial High Court, Permanent Trial at Bar and the Commercial High Court.

The duty of a judicial officer is sacred and the sacrosanct character of the office could be maintained only upon public confidence.

In *Mohammed Shahabuddin v. State of Bihar*, Justice Dr. Dalveer Bhandar, observed;

(I quote)

“The courts like other institutions also belong to the people. They are as much human institutions as any other. The other instruments and institutions of the State may survive by the power of the purse or the might of the sword. But not the courts. The courts have no such means or power. The courts could survive only by the strength of public confidence. The public confidence can be fostered by exposing courts more and more to the public gaze.”

(unquote)

Mr. Attorney, Mr. President, during my career as a member of the bar and in the judiciary, I have witnessed as to how the public respects the judiciary. It is left to the members of the judiciary to maintain that respect and confidence.

I have at all times made every endeavor to maintain the public confidence and the confidence of the bar. I look forward to continuing the spirit of cooperation and confidence in the future.

I take this opportunity, to wish the very best in life and career, to my brother judges and sister judges who took oaths with me as judges of the Court of Appeal.

Thank You and May the triple gem bless you. God bless You all.