

GREAT STALWARTS OF LEGAL PROFESSION*

I am delighted to associate myself with this brief but memorable function,

held today by the Supreme Court Bar Association, dedicated to the memory of two great stalwarts of legal profession, not physically present amongst us, but whose deeds, achievements and contribution to the legal profession, as also to the benefit of humanity as a whole, continue to keep their memory alive amongst us.

Last year, the portrait of late Shri Nani A. Palkhivala was unveiled by Shri V.N. Khare, the then Chief Justice of India. Today, I have the privilege of inaugurating Nani A. Palkhivala Library.

Physically, Palkhivala was a lean and thin person with an average height. His achievements as a great lawyer and a great human being enabled his personality achieve such heights as has not been surpassed by anyone in the preceding century and would be difficult for anyone, even in the times to come. He is the one, who was conferred with Honorary Degrees of Law by Lawrence University, Wisconsin, USA for being India's leading author, scholar, teacher and practitioner of Constitutional Law and defender of liberties of individuals and institutions. The Princeton University, New Jersey, U.S.A. conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws on him for being "defender of constitutional liberties, champion of human rights, teacher, author and economic developer".

Palkhivala was a very successful and persuasive advocate, a great lawyer by all standards and yet unassuming and down to earth. There are a very few who are blessed with all the three qualities, as were the traits of Palkhivala's personality. He was a voracious reader, prolific writer and a speaker the blessed with capacity to hold the audience spell-bound. A library, dedicated to his memory, is a befitting tribute to of this great man by the Supreme Court Bar Association. Nani Palkhivala Library would inspire young lawyers to read, to enrich their store of knowledge and, at the same time, imbibe the qualities of Palkhivala, by feeling inspired to emulate such qualities, as have lent unlimited dimensions to his personality – each dimension full of glory.

For me, it is a matter of equal privilege and honour to unveil the portrait of Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Mishra, installed in the precincts of the Supreme Court Bar Association. Only a few months before, I had the honour of being in Allahabad, at an event, marking the closing of Pandit Kanhaiyalal Mishra Centenary Celebration.

Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Mishra was an intellectual giant. He was a man of brilliance unbound. He secured hundred percent marks in English Essay paper in the I.C.S. Examination in the year 1926. In 1927, he passed LL.B. examination from Banaras Hindu University and secured above 90 per cent marks in every subject in law. He is the one, who was paid a compliment, to be written in words of gold, originating from Professor Sir Arthur Quailer Quoch, an author of great reputation, – "It is English men who conquered India, but it is only Kanhaiya Lal Mishra who conquered English." In spite of his being a busy lawyer, he was involved in various social, cultural and educational institutions in different capacities. Justice S.R. Das, the then Chief Justice of India, complimented late Shri Mishra by inviting him to more often appear in cases before the Supreme Court because he said that "in the cases in which you appear it raises the standard of

the judgments". A touching dialogue between three great persons of legal profession is a tribute to Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Mishra. While filing an appeal before a Bench, in which Hon'ble Justice M.C. Chhagla was a senior Judge, Nani Palkhivala said that he had a strong case and he was supported by the judgment of the Supreme Court in his favour. Mr. Justice Chhagla asked – "Why did you lose before the learned Single Judge?" Palkhivala replied, "I lost not because I have a weak case. I lost because of the arguments of Mr. Mishra which mesmerized the learned single Judge to commit an error." Mr. Justice Chhagla quipped, "Then he might mesmerize this Bench also."

I cannot do better than to quote Mr. Justice V.R. Krsihna Iyer from what he said on the occasion of unveiling the portrait of Chief Justice Mr. T.M.M. Ismail. He said, - "A portrait is chemistry plus artistry projecting the personality." It carries the message of the personality of the person whose portrait is being unveiled to the posterity. Also, it is an honour ***** by way of acknowledgment of gratitude by the future generation, for what a great person, of the preceding times, has done and left behind for them to inherit.

The Library, named in the memory of Nani A. Palkhivala and the portrait of Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Mishra, which I have the honour of inaugurating unveiling respectively, today, would perpetuate the memory of these stalwarts amongst us and also inspire this generation, especially the young entrants in the profession, to become like them.



* Speech delivered on the occasion of inaugurating Nani Palkhiwala Library and unveiling the portrait of Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Mishra on 4th May, 2005, at New Lawyers' Chamber, Supreme Court of India.