

**ADDRESS BY HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE SHRI DIPANKAR DATTA, AT THE FULL COURT REFERENCE IN THE MEMORY OF LATE RAJANI IYER, SENIOR ADVOCATE, ON 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2022 AT 10 AM, IN ROOM NO.46 CENTRAL COURT HALL, MAIN BUILDING, HIGH COURT, BOMBAY.**

My esteemed Sister and Brother Judges,

**Dr. Uday P. Warunjikar,**

Member, Bar Council of Maharashtra & Goa

**Shri Nitin Thakker,**

President, Bombay Bar Association

**Smt. Anjali Helekar,**

Vice-President, Advocates' Association of Western India

**Shri Kaiwan Kalyaniwala,**

President, Bombay Incorporated Law Society

Esteemed Senior Advocates and other learned members of the Bar,

Bereaved members of the Iyer family,

Members of the Registry and the staff,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We have assembled this morning for paying homage to late Rajani Iyer, Senior Advocate, who braved her illness and left for her heavenly abode on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2022, a month short of her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Though late Rajani Iyer is not amongst us now, she will be remembered for being a woman full of grace, as well as for the

status and reputation that she achieved in the legal profession, and would remain an inspiration for the future generation. Instead of mourning her demise, let us celebrate her life and works while remembering her on this occasion.

Rajani Iyer was born on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1952. She completed her schooling at Queen Mary School, Bombay in 1968 and graduated in Arts with Honors in Economics from St. Xavier's College, Bombay, in 1972. Then, she completed her post-graduation in Arts with Economics from Bombay University in 1974.

Rajani Iyer's inspiration was her father, a well-known lawyer who practiced criminal law. She enrolled herself in the Government Law College, Bombay in 1975 and obtained her Bachelor's degree in Law in 1978. Thereafter, she also qualified as a Solicitor in 1979.

In the beginning, Rajani Iyer had a brief stint with the law firm, namely, Mulla & Mulla and then, joined the chamber of Senior Advocate Ashok Desai. With her commitment, dedication and hard work, in no time, she established a successful practice and earned a name for herself.

Rajani Iyer had a flourishing practice in various branches of law including Constitutional law, Commercial law, Arbitration, Public Interest Litigation, Matrimonial and Family Law, Domestic Violence cases, cases related to Civil Liberties, etc. She was one of the most sought after and accessible lawyers and had appeared in many significant and high-profile cases.

For her accomplished practice, Rajani Iyer was designated as a Senior Advocate by the Bombay High Court on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2006. It is a matter of record that she has been one of only six lady Senior Advocates in the Bombay High Court and at the relevant time, she was the 3<sup>rd</sup> lady lawyer to have been designated as such.

Rajani Iyer was a lawyer par excellence. She used to take up cases with courage and fearlessness and always put her heart and soul in them. It is well known that she was articulate, crisp and precise in her arguments and was always well prepared, whether it was a *pro bono* case or a well-paying brief. She had immense respect for the opposite side and the Bench. I am told there were many upcoming lawyers, who yearned to be her juniors and always watched her eagerly arguing the cases in Court and thereby derive suitable benefits from her arguments. She was one of the most popular and respected lawyers and was liked by one and all – be it her own colleagues – seniors or juniors, clients, office staff or even the court staff. Also, she was so generous that she used to give priority to payment of fees of her juniors than hers.

She was straightforward and a 'no nonsense' person. She was always ready to take on people on the wrong side. She was open-minded; never used to be secretive and a tough person who always called a spade a spade.

Rajani Iyer was on the forefront of the mediation movement in India and spearheaded it in Mumbai. The fine skills

of mediation came to her naturally. She was proficient and had great qualities of compassion and empathy for which she was approached by many litigants and lawyers.

Apart from many accomplishments as a formidable advocate, Rajani Iyer will be remembered for her deep and unwavering commitment to civil liberties and human rights. She believed in freedom of thought and speech and the right to dissent and differ. She was an activist and volunteer member of the Citizens for Democracy, and also an active member of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) for over 25 years. In fact, she had fought for civil rights even during the emergency and never looked back in her pursuit to have constitutional rights for citizens upheld.

In addition to the legal profession, Rajani Iyer was a Trustee of Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya Trust and contributed a lot towards the said Trust and its activities.

I am informed that she was a friend indeed to those in need. She was warm, loyal, loving, caring and quick to help. Her great qualities as a fine and an extra-ordinary human being, full of etiquettes and manners, get reflected through the rich tributes paid to her on demise by eminent judges, senior lawyers and many others.

Rajani Iyer is survived by her brother and his family members.

On behalf of my esteemed colleagues as also on my personal behalf, I convey deepest condolences to the members of the bereaved family. I pray that the Almighty gives them the strength to bear the irreplaceable loss and also pray that the noble soul of late Rajani Iyer attains "sadgati".

Om Shanti ! Shanti !! Shanti !!!

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**ADDRESS BY DR. UDAY P. WARUNJIKAR, MEMBER, BAR COUNCIL OF MAHARASHTRA & GOA, AT THE FULL COURT REFERENCE IN THE MEMORY OF LATE RAJANI IYER, SENIOR ADVOCATE, ON 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2022 AT 10 AM, IN ROOM NO.46 CENTRAL COURT HALL, MAIN BUILDING, HIGH COURT, BOMBAY.**

The Hon'ble Chief Justice,

Hon'ble Judges of this Court,

**Shri Nitin Thakker,**  
President, Bombay Bar Association

**Smt. Anjali Helekar,**  
Vice-President, Advocates' Association of Western India

**Shri Kaiwan Kalyaniwala,**  
President, Bombay Incorporated Law Society

Esteemed Senior Advocates and other learned members of the Bar,

Bereaved members of the Iyer family,

Members of the Registry and the staff,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I, on behalf of Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa as well as 2 lakhs 15 thousand lawyers enrolled from the States of Maharashtra and Goa, fully associate myself with the feelings expressed by Hon'ble the Chief Justice.

Advocate Rajani Iyer, after completing B. A. (Economics) as well as M. A. (Economics), she joined Government Law College. She was also teaching the subject of economic at relevant time. She completed her Article-ship and became a Solicitor in the year 1979. She was

seen assisting the Hon'ble Judges in different PIL matters concerning family disputes and the Company law matters. She is a unique example of a solicitor who became a Senior Advocate later on. Considering her contribution in the field of law, she was designated as a Senior Advocate by our High Court in the year 2006. She was the third lady lawyer by that time who was designated as Senior Advocate.

Now a days we have seen large number of cases are getting referred for mediation. However, it is said that first case from the Bombay High Court, which was referred for mediation was the same which was conducted by Senior Advocate Rajani Iyer. Later on, she became a trained mediator. Not only that, she also trained large number of candidates to become a trained mediator. In my individual capacity, it was my privilege to appear before Advocate Rajani Iyer when she was a mediator. Speaking for myself, I have opposed her in several matrimonial matters also. She was a dedicated, disciplined and reliable lawyer. She was known as a lawyer who always follow the ethics.

During last few years, she has delivered several lectures by using online mechanism. She was active on the social media platform also. During the lockdown period, she had delivered a lecture for Advocate Vasantrao Patil Lawyers Academy, which was supported by Sangli Bar Association in the State of Maharashtra. She was keen to teach the young generations. She started her career as a teacher of economics; however, during her life, she trained large number of young lawyers. She was a role model for several young lawyers.

She always insisted that the lawyers should have command over the language of the Court. She believed in the freedom of speech and

expression. She also contributed in various landmark cases, which includes A. R. Antulay vs. R. S. Nayak. She had successfully argued before Justice B. N. Shrikrishna Commission representing the victims of the Mumbai Riot. She was also a part of important cases relating to environmental issues. She took active part in various international legal conference.

On account of her sad demise, we have lost a strong supporter of the civil liberties and advocate who motivated large number of lawyers to follow her footprints.

She left for heavenly abode on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022. On account of her demise, we have lost a very good human being and a very good law teacher.

On behalf of Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa, which represents 2 lakhs 15 thousand lawyers in the States of Maharashtra and Goa as well as on behalf of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the elected members of Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa, I express our deep condolences to the family members of Senior Advocate Ms. Rajani Iyer.

God give enough strength to the family members of Late Advocate Ms. Rajani Iyer.

Let her soul rest in eternal peace.

**OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI**

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**ADDRESS BY SHRI NITIN THAKKER, PRESIDENT, BOMBAY BAR ASSOCIATION, AT THE FULL COURT REFERENCE IN THE MEMORY OF LATE RAJANI IYER, SENIOR ADVOCATE, ON 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2022 AT 10 AM, IN ROOM NO.46 CENTRAL COURT HALL, MAIN BUILDING, HIGH COURT, BOMBAY.**

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**Smt. Anjali Helekar,**

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**Shri Kaiwan Kalyaniwala,**

President, Bombay Incorporated Law Society

Esteemed Senior Advocates and other learned members of the Bar,

Bereaved members of the Iyer family,

Members of the Registry and the staff,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

What is lovely never dies, but passes into another loveliness, star-dust or sea foam, flower or winged air. So said Thomas Aldrich, a Nineteenth century author.

Rajani was a lovely person. Full of life, passion, compassion, outspoken, hard working. She was liked and loved by all who came in touch with her. She was *Ajatshartu*. She did not have any enemies.

Even when she was suffering from the dreaded disease, she did not let us know her sufferings but she always showed lot of

enthusiasm in discussing law, current affairs, environment etc. as if nothing is wrong with her physically.

She was a firm believer of freedom of speech and expression. She actively opposed emergency and campaigned for Mr. Ram Jethmalani in the election held immediately after emergency was lifted. She was a volunteer Member of the Citizens for Democracy and People's Union of Civil Liberties. The roots for her activism can be traced to her student days when she commenced and actively participated in the movement to rewrite constitution of the Students Council of St. Xavier's College from where she did her B.A. with Economics. She, while doing her M.A. in economics from University of Bombay agitated for holding timely exams, provide for library, canteen and other facilities for students. She also organized closure/lockout at University to agitate for providing basic facilities for students at Kalina Campus.

For young law students and young lawyers, she was a source of inspiration.

The then 18 years' old student who is now a successful lawyer shared his experience of Rajani and I would like to share in his own words,

'In 1996, as an enthusiastic 18 year old first-year law student, I recall seeking out Ms. Rajani Iyer's guidance on what then appeared to be a complex moot court problem. She had asked me to meet her at the Bombay High Court library, and I'd read the moot problem and the relevant laws multiple times in the hope that I would be well prepared for my first meeting with her. I was eager to be better armed to tackle the issues in the brief after that meeting. Little did I realise, a meeting with Rajani would leave me, not just better armed to deal with issues in a brief, but really, better equipped to deal with a career in law. This was the case then, and continued to be the case henceforth at every meeting with her. Rajani started the meeting by asking me why I'd picked law as a career. I replied giving her a few reasons why law was the profession for me.

Rajani patiently heard me out and then looked straight at me, her presence enveloping everything in sight, as it normally did, and explained to me that law was a calling and not just a profession. She explained with many reasons the difference between the two, and said that life as a lawyer, would be incredible, whilst being demanding and rewarding at the same time. I won that moot, and many cases thereafter, fueled in no small part by the passion she shared with me that day.'

This was Rajani. So many young lawyers have shared their experiences as how she touched their lives and shaped their career in the profession.

It was way back in 1978 when one day Shri Ashok Desai introduced me to Rajani in High Court Library as his junior. From that day our friendship began.

I remember the mornings spent in the high court library during our junior days when we all would discuss our matters of the day if there is a law point to be discussed and she would very enthusiastically take part in the discussion.

One another thing to admire about her is, as mentioned by her junior Ms. Manjari Shah the other day that she was, "An unapologetic feminist, Rajani demanded parity but sought no personal concessions whatsoever on account of being a woman."

She was a rock for her friends and would go out of her way to help them. We travelled together in Scandinavia and Canada. We have a lot of memories. She was a travel buff. She loved traveling across different countries. We would share experiences of travel in different countries. When I was to travel to South America - being a vegetarian - I was carrying lot of dry snacks. She advised me to carry a rice cooker, she gave her cooker. That proved to be a great boon for me as I could get fresh meals.

I for myself and all the members of Bombay Bar Association fully associate myself with the sentiments expressed by My Lord the Chief Justice.

The Learned Additional Solicitor General and the learned Advocate General have asked me to convey their regrets for not being able to participate in the reference today for personal reasons and are joining in the sentiments expressed today.

Rajani leaves behind her brother Mr. Ravi Krishnamurthy, also a solicitor and his daughter Mallika who was treated by Rajani as her daughter. Mallika's children were very much attached to Rajani. Our heartfelt condolences to the family and prayers for eternal peace to her noble soul.

Though Rajani has left us but she will always remain in our hearts.

Dorothy Ferguson a poet said, "Only a moment you stayed, but what an imprint your footprints have left on our hearts."

Om Shanti

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**ADDRESS BY SMT. ANJALI HELEKAR, VICE-PRESIDENT, ADVOCATES' ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN INDIA, AT THE FULL COURT REFERENCE IN THE MEMORY OF LATE RAJANI IYER, SENIOR ADVOCATE, ON 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2022 AT 10 AM, IN ROOM NO.46 CENTRAL COURT HALL, MAIN BUILDING, HIGH COURT, BOMBAY.**

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**Shri Nitin Thakker,**

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**Shri Kaiwan Kalyaniwala,**

President, Bombay Incorporated Law Society

Esteemed Senior Advocates and other learned members of the Bar,

Bereaved members of the Iyer family,

Members of the Registry and the staff,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am here to pay homage to late Advocate Rajani Iyer on behalf of Advocates' Association of Western India.

As stated by the earlier speakers, Advocate Rajani Iyer was one of few women advocates who was conferred with "Senior Advocate" designation. In the profession dominated by the male colleagues, she created her own space. She had a unique personality. For a new girl in profession, she always was an inspiration and a role model.

I did not get opportunity to work with her, but I have been informed by some senior lady members of Bar that she was a person who was always true to her ideology and her principles. No one could pressurize her to have any opinion against her ideology. At the same time, she was frank to admit if she thought that she needs to change opinion about any issue or any person. She always used to encourage junior advocates. She was always approachable.

She was a member of Advocates' Association of Western India. Advocate Seema Sarnaik informed me, when Rajani had some spare time while having work in a Court near Bar Room 36, her liking for a strong Espresso Coffee from Ashok and tasty *kandabhajji*, which are served in 36, used to bring her in 36 and for a small chat.

Rajani had a very humane approach. She used to always encourage juniors. She was a support system for those women advocates who tried to make a mark as also guided them to start different initiatives which will help newcomers.

On behalf of myself and on behalf of Advocates' Association of Western India, I pay my respectful homage to the departed soul. I pray to god to give strength and courage to the family members.

May her soul rest in peace.

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**ADDRESS BY SHRI KAIWAN KALYANIWALA, PRESIDENT, BOMBAY INCORPORATED LAW SOCIETY, AT THE FULL COURT REFERENCE IN THE MEMORY OF LATE RAJANI IYER, SENIOR ADVOCATE, ON 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2022 AT 10 AM, IN ROOM NO.46 CENTRAL COURT HALL, MAIN BUILDING, HIGH COURT, BOMBAY.**

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Esteemed Senior Advocates and other learned members of the Bar,

Bereaved members of the Iyer family,

Members of the Registry and the staff,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I have the honour, albeit sadly, to address this Reference as President of the Bombay Incorporated Law Society on whose behalf, I express condolences on the sad demise of Rajani Iyer.

Much has already been spoken in praise of the lady, Ms. Iyer was. Even so, that would not be enough. Ms. Iyer was held in the highest esteem by both judges and her peers. At a time when lady lawyers in counsel practice were few and far

between, Ms. Iyer held her own as an Advocate of great competence. She had the ability to handle matters covering a large canvas of laws. Causes concerning the environment, women's rights and breach of fundamental rights affecting the common man, were particularly close to her heart. It was gratifying to see the kind of audience of Ms. Iyer received from the Bench.

Ms. Iyer had a distinguished career as Senior Counsel of this Court. On a personal note, I had the pleasure of briefing Ms. Iyer on several occasions. In her advocacy, she was clear, thorough and firm – in her views, both personal and of the law she practiced, she was honest and forthright – and as a person, she was dignified, amicable, thoughtful, humorous and a lovely human being. Ms. Iyer was a Solicitor's Counsel – prepared meticulously for her matters, represented her client with dignity and was always dutifully present. Rajani, we will miss you dearly.

I wish to convey our heartfelt condolences to the members of her family.

May the departed soul rest in peace.

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