

**Farewell Address for Prof.Dr. M. P. Singh**

**Vice Chancellor: National Institute of Juridical Sciences (NUJS)**

**June 2007 – November 2011**

*Written and delivered by Ms. Jhalak Kakkar*

*NUJS student – 5<sup>th</sup> year*

*On the occasion of Dr. M. P. Singh's college farewell*

Dear Friends,

Leo Rosten said, *“The purpose of life is to matter, to be productive, to be useful, to have it make some difference, that you have lived at all.”*

Today I would like to talk about a man who *has made a difference*.

In July 2007, when I joined NUJS, it was a different place. Red coloured mud surrounded the cesspool. Rough drafts for project, were mandated at a 1,000 words. The length of projects was specified at an unwieldy 5,000 words. In addition, project vivas, subject vivas and closed book exams held sway. Course design was closely regulated. Students had a limited choice of ‘optional’ subjects. There was no college auditorium. We were requested to vacate the library at 7:30 pm and were securely ensconced into our hostels by 10 pm.

In November 2011, we, the students of NUJS, live in a different reality. And are grateful for it. Academic freedom dominates the college environment. Students have found deliverance from the yoke of cumbersome schedules; a 1,500-word project and a project viva is all that is required. Take home exams, open book exams, multiple ‘optional courses’ and ‘credit courses’ are a distinguishing feature of today’s NUJS. Attendance regulations have been relaxed. Students have been quick to harness the resultant free time; not surprisingly, this additional time has been channelized into a variety of activities - the Informal Discussion Group has sprung up, new journals have blossomed, and defunct societies have revived – leading to a more stimulating academic atmosphere at NUJS. Further, there is flowering of academic journals and students have embraced writing passionately; the NUJS Law Review being a glowing example.

*I ask you, “Who has made this difference?”*

The quality of the faculty has been further strengthened. Professors are given the freedom to design as well as conduct their own courses. Students at NUJS find inspiration by lending an ear to the widely acclaimed, yet, controversial personalities who are regularly invited to speak at NUJS. In short, today’s NUJS offers multi-dimensional opportunities to expand our worldview.

*Who has made this difference?*

Library timings have been extended. The library only sleeps between two a.m. and six a.m. - a mere four hours. And during exams, it does not close at all.

This auditorium, this very auditorium where we sit today, has changed the face of NUJS. Its fruition has enabled us to organize events and engage with personalities of a caliber seldom seen at any law institute before. The range has been wide indeed; experienced statesmen like Dr. Abdul Kalam, to outstanding performers like Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia have graced this auditorium. Conferences, such as the one on Electoral Reforms, have stimulated us intellectually.

*Who has made this difference?*

We have gathered today to honour the very man who has made this perceptible difference; a man who has transformed NUJS - Professor Dr. Mahendra Pal Singh.

Ayn Rand said, *“Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps, down new roads, armed with nothing but their own vision.”*

As the present fifth year batch of law students took its first steps in NUJS, it was Prof. M.P. Singh who set about implementing his vision; he has painstakingly, over the last four and a half years, laid the foundation for a truly exceptional academic institution. A fine institution indeed; one that is viewed with respect and admiration. As he kept molding NUJS with his vision, we willingly kept adapting to it. Nevertheless, whenever we squirmed and protested, he remolded it. Prof. M.P. Singh has changed NUJS in ways few would have thought possible.

Many of us, specially the ones in the fifth year, find it impossible to accept the idea that we will not finish our journey at NUJS alongside Prof. M. P. Singh. Equally importantly, many of us regret that Prof. MP Singh will not be able to offer us his blessings, in person, on our convocation!

Early in 2011, it was announced that Prof. M.P. Singh would be retiring soon. Since then, NUJS has been rife with speculation on the candidature of the new Vice Chancellor. Students have discussed potential candidates and dismissed them with ease. We pondered the qualities vital for this key position. An excellent academic standing was deemed necessary to attract distinguished professors and foster valuable academic opportunities. Another indispensable was a good administrator. Approachability had to be in abundant measure, facilitating students to voice their grievances unhesitatingly. Someone who would further the stature of NUJS. As we deliberated, we came to realize that Prof. M.P. Singh is an embodiment of all these qualities and much else as well. It seems impossible that anyone else can live up to the quality standards set by him.

India is in dire need of accomplished educationalists. Today, we have many academics, but how many ‘teachers’ have we? Visionary men who can build celebrated academics institutions. Patient and kind human beings, learned in ways of life, so they can teach more than just academics; teach you to lead your life courageously and compassionately. We, the students of NUJS, shall remain eternally grateful to Prof. M.P. Singh for showing us the way.

Most of all, we want to thank Prof. Singh for all the small things that made all the difference; for being available and approachable, for anything and everything, for being a bridge between the faculty and students, for creating a warm environment in

NUJS – a friendly place where we can all come together, on occasions such as the NUJS night, and laugh with each other.

We want to thank him for many project extensions awarded, (ostensibly due to sudden power failures), for setting right unreasonable exam schedules and even for accommodating requests to schedule exams on Sundays.

We want to thank him for his unconditional support of student activities, for sanctioning funds for the NUJS cultural festival, for facilitating the gym, and for the International Law Student Association conference.

Prof. M.P. Singh has given a human face to a system that can be dauntingly bureaucratic.

He made a difference to our institution as also to our individual lives. I have no doubt many of us can recount touching stories of the manner in which Prof. M.P. Singh affected our lives positively.

I speak for each member of the general body when I state: there was security in knowing that Prof. M.P. Singh was at the helm of affairs at NUJS. There was certainty that everything would be handled; handled justly and efficiently. Prof. M.P. Singh is not only our guru, he is the institution's patriarch. Above all, he is a humble educationalist who has made a world of a difference to our lives.

Sir, you have molded NUJS; in so doing, you have propelled us towards greater heights – we owe you our every success. Your students love you for being a man of immense humility and simplicity. A man so very simple that you refused to sanction any University money for your own farewell! Our humble farewell to you is a measure of the unrestrained flow of love you evoke from your students, faculty and administration. Sir, you will be greatly missed. At NUJS, we will forever remain in gratitude for making a perceptible difference to our lives. Thank you!