



23rd September, 1956 – 8th April, 2026

Full Court Reference in the memory of

Late Shri Mukul Gupta

Senior Advocate

held on Wednesday, the 6th May 2026

at 10.30 a.m. in the Court of The Hon'ble The Chief Justice of India

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Letter from the Registrar, Supreme Court of India

Kuntal Sharma Pathak
Registrar
Supreme Court of India



Mobile – 9435110065
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F.No.99/Ref/2026/SCA(Genl)
7th May, 2026

Madam,

A Full Court Reference was held in the memory of late Shri Mukul Gupta, Senior Advocate on 6th May, 2026 in the Hon'ble Chief Justice's Court. Rich tributes were paid to Shri Gupta by Shri R Venkataramani, Learned Attorney General for India; Shri Vikas Singh, President, Supreme Court Bar Association and Hon'ble Mr. Surya Kant, the Chief Justice of India. After the references were read, two minutes' silence was observed in his memory.

I humbly forward a booklet containing memorial speeches delivered at the Full Court Reference, as aforesaid, along with heartfelt condolences of the Officers and members of the staff of the Supreme Court Registry to you and other members of the family.

Encl.: As above.

Yours sincerely,

Registrar (J)(Court & Building)

To,

Ms. Sangeeta Gupta,
C-8, Hauz Khas,
Opposite Police Station Hauz Khas,
New Delhi-110016.

*List of Business for 6th May, 2026 in respect of
Full Court Reference*



SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

LIST OF BUSINESS FOR WEDNESDAY THE 6TH MAY, 2026

CHIEF JUSTICE'S COURT

AT 10.30 A.M.

FULL COURT REFERENCE IN THE MEMORY OF

LATE SHRI VIJAY KUMAR JHANJI,

LATE SHRI A.D.N. RAO,

LATE SHRI MUKUL GUPTA AND

LATE SHRI S. BALAKRISHNAN,

SENIOR ADVOCATES.

Coram of Hon'ble Judges at the Full Court Reference

- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Vikram Nath*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice J.K. Maheshwari*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mrs. Justice B.V. Nagarathna*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice M.M. Sundresh*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Pamidighantam Sri Narasimha*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice J.B. Pardiwala*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Dipankar Datta*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Pankaj Mithal*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjay Karol*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjay Kumar*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Manoj Misra*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Aravind Kumar*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice K.V. Viswanathan*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ujjal Bhuyan*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sarasa Venkatanarayana Bhatti*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Satish Chandra Sharma*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Augustine George Masih*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sandeep Mehta*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Prasanna Bhalachandra Varale*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice N. Kotiswar Singh*

- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice R. Mahadevan*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Manmohan*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice K. Vinod Chandran*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Joymalya Bagchi*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice N. V. Anjaria*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Vijay Bishnoi*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Atul Sharachchandra Chandurkar*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Alok Aradhe*
- ❖ *Hon'ble Mr. Justice Vipul Manubhai Pancholi*

XXXXX

Reference made on 6th May, 2026

by

Ld. Attorney General for India

Shri R. Venkataramani

in the memory of

Late Shri Vijay Kumar Jhanji,

Late Shri A.D.N. Rao,

Late Shri Mukul Gupta and

Late Shri S. Balakrishnan,

Senior Advocates

Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India, Hon'ble Judges of the Supreme Court, the Solicitor General of India, Additional Solicitors General, President and Office Bearers of the Supreme Court Bar Association, President and Office Bearers of the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association, Officers and members of Supreme Court Registry, members of the Bar, and family members of Late Shri Vijay Kumar Jhanji, Late Shri A.D.N. Rao, Late Shri Mukul Gupta and Late Shri S. Balakrishnan, Senior Advocates. Ladies and Gentlemen.

Shri Vijay Kumar Jhanji

1. Shri Vijay Kumar Jhanji, affectionately known as V. K. Jhanji, was a proud product of the University of Delhi and a student who earned distinctions. From an early age, he displayed a deep inclination towards learning, discipline, and public service.

2. He commenced his professional career in Ludhiana under the guidance of his cousin, Late Mr. Mohan Lal Jhanji, a distinguished civil lawyer. After his enrolment with the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana in the year 1971, and after shifting his practice to the High Court, it was natural for him to quickly grow as a counsel of repute. Mr. Jhanji built a formidable practice, earning recognition for his command over civil, constitutional, and taxation matters. In 1989, he was designated as a Senior Advocate by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

3. *His distinguished reputation and integrity rightly earned him elevation as an Additional Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on 15th March 1991, and he was confirmed as a Permanent Judge on 8th July 1992. The call of duty took him to the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in the year 2001. During his tenure there, he also discharged the responsibilities of Acting Chief Justice on two occasions—first from 9th April 2002 to 14th May 2002, and thereafter from 5th March 2003 to 4th February 2004.*

4. *In 2005, he was transferred to the High Court of Himachal Pradesh. After a long and distinguished judicial career marked by fairness and an unwavering commitment to justice, Justice V. K. Jhanji demitted office on 21st March 2006 upon attaining the age of superannuation.*

5. *Following his retirement, he returned to practice as a Senior Advocate before this Hon'ble Court, where he continued to contribute to the legal profession with the same distinction for more than 15 years, until 2023. Thereafter, he moved back to Chandigarh, where he spent his remaining years in quiet retirement.*

6. *His life and work stand as a testament to the qualities of learning, commitment, empathy, and the inclination to serve the cause of justice. We mourn his demise and share our condolences with the dear members of his family.*

Shri A.D.N. Rao

1. *Annam Durga Nageshwara Rao, fondly called A. D. N. Rao, was the proud son of Annam Subba Rao, who was also a well-known and established member of the Supreme Court Bar.*

2. *Having completed his schooling from Frank Anthony Public School, New Delhi, he went on to pursue Honours in Political Science from Shri Venkateswara College and was known to be a student with a keen and enquiring mind. His engagement as a debater during his college days sowed the seeds for his later growth at the Bar. He was also an active social worker and rendered service in the NSS for a considerable period.*

3. *His deep knowledge of Telugu earned him the presidency of the Telugu Bhasha Parishad from 1982 to 1983.*

4. *He went on to study law at Sir C. R. Reddy Law College, West Godavari. He secured a First Class and also obtained ranks every year. With his father being a member of the Supreme Court Bar, he began his practice in 1987 and became a noted member of the Bar in no time. He cleared the Advocate-on-Record Examination in 1992.*

5. Besides his practice in land reforms, tenancy and civil law, he branched into the fields of criminal and environmental law. He had the distinction of representing the CBI in important matters such as the Bihar Fodder Scam, Bofors, Chandraswami, P. V. Narasimha Rao matter, and Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav matter before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi. Having 393 reported judgments exclusively by the Supreme Court to his credit was a rare distinction. He appeared for various judicial officers in their matters. He had the singular distinction of being the Standing Counsel for the Ministry of Environment and Forests for 11 years. He also represented the Archaeological Survey of India, LIC, IOCL, BPCL, the Delhi High Court, and was even Advocate-on-Record for the Registrar General, Supreme Court, in certain matters. Given his influential professional contributions in environmental law, he was called upon to serve as President of the NGT Bar before he was designated as Senior Advocate by the Supreme Court in the year 2019.

6. It was but natural that, with all these accomplishments, he was a regular resource person and delivered lectures at various workshops. He played a remarkable role in distinguished environmental matters such as M. C. Mehta, T. N. Godavarman, Goa Foundation, Centre for Environment Law, WWF-I v. Union of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Environment Awareness Forum v. State of Jammu and Kashmir, and A. Rangarajan v. Union of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests, concerning the elephant corridor.

7. His engagement as an Amicus took him to archaeological sites and inspections. His immense knowledge of flora and fauna added to his passionate involvement in ecology.

8. In the midst of all this, he also found time to care for the needs of specially abled children housed in several establishments, and ensured that once a year he would arrange a small picnic and outing for them.

9. His philanthropic attitude persuaded him to introduce scholarships in his alma mater. He also got a hostel ward built in his college in the name of his mother at C. R. Reddy Law College.

10. The growth of environmental jurisprudence through matters such as M. C. Mehta, Common Cause, T. N. Godavarman and Goa Foundation owes significantly to the unsettling commitment, objectivity and integrity of Shri A. D. N. Rao. The Supreme Court will miss his presence.

11. *Destiny has prematurely taken away from us a valiant fighter of many common causes. We deeply share our condolences with the members of his dear family.*

Shri S. Balakrishnan

1. *Like the members of his dear family, his daughter Akhila, a distinguished professor in the field of Radiology at RML Hospital, and his equally distinguished son-in-law, Shri Subramonium Prasad, Judge of the High Court of Delhi, I too miss the loving and warm presence and company of Late Shri S. Balakrishnan. As a toddler at the Bar in 1979, I came to know him as a distinguished member of the Bar.*

2. *Late Shri S. Balakrishnan had the privilege of working under Shri V. K. Krishna Menon, Senior Advocate and former Union Minister of Defence. He subsequently became associated with Ramamoorthy and Co., where he worked alongside distinguished legal luminaries like Shri R. K. Garg, Shri M. K. Ramamoorthy, Shri D. P. Singh and Justice S. C. Agarwal. Thereafter, he joined the chamber of Shri N. C. Chatterjee, a renowned Senior Advocate. Subsequently, he formed a partnership with Shri Ghatate, called Balakrishnan and Ghatate.*

3. *His distinguished legal career, spanning several decades, was marked by professional excellence, intellectual depth and an unwavering adherence to the highest standards of professional ethics. He was widely respected not only as a brilliant lawyer and an accomplished draftsman, but also as a humane, generous and deeply encouraging mentor to numerous young advocates.*

4. *Shri Balakrishnan completed his schooling from DTEA School, Mandir Marg, New Delhi. Thereafter, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Khalsa College, University of Delhi. Subsequently, on completing his law, he was enrolled as an advocate in the year 1962 and never looked back.*

5. *Shri Balakrishnan became an Advocate-on-Record of the Supreme Court of India in 1965. In recognition of his contribution to the profession, he was designated as a Senior Advocate by the Supreme Court in the year 1998.*

6. *He enjoyed an illustrious practice and was particularly renowned for his expertise in service and civil law, where he contributed to a number of landmark judgments. His briefs came from many parts of the country. He also served as Standing Counsel for the Bombay Port Trust and the Madras Port Trust for many years. I have fond*

memories of having worked with him in several briefs. He had a remarkable ability to break down intricate and complex issues into simple propositions.

7. *As an advocate, Shri Balakrishnan was admired for his precision and clarity. His drafting skills were remarkable, and his petitions were very often mentioned in courts for their elegance in drafting.*

8. *He belonged to the class of those whose strength was in persuasion rather than being loud in court, and who believed that advocacy was best advanced through substance rather than display. He never overstated a case, nor did he resort to theatrics in court, earning the respect of both the Bench and the Bar. The younger members of the Bar today miss such class.*

9. *Beyond his professional achievements, Shri Balakrishnan was also a man of wide intellectual and spiritual interests. He contributed to the legal fraternity through his work, *Professional Ethics for Lawyers: Changing Profession, Changing Ethics*, originally by Shri Raju Ramachandran and revised by Shri S. Balakrishnan. He also authored books outside law, including *Cow—A Celestial Being*. In addition, he wrote on spiritual subjects, including works on the science of daily mantras chanted by millions of the Hindu fold.*

10. *Shri Balakrishnan will be remembered as a noble soul. His cheerfulness was infectious. His gentle demeanour and the unfading smile he always carried dissolved stress and tension with ease.*

11. *His chamber at Lawyers' Chamber No. 104 in the Supreme Court was always open to young members of the Bar. I know that he was indulgent to many who used to provide Chamber No. 104 as their official address.*

12. *He mentored so many young lawyers, and even in his office, it is said that he kept everyone's morale up. By timely quotations like “there is hope” or “this too shall pass”, he gave solace. I know that such words of comfort kept his clients in good humour and helped them face their adversities with grace. He was a friend, philosopher and guide not only to fellow advocates but also to clients, many of whom became lifelong friends. In short, his gentle disposition and smiling mind were both embodiments of kindness and warmth.*

13. *His life stands as a testament to perseverance, patience, excellence in advocacy, dignity in conduct and kindness in human relations. His legacy will continue to inspire members of the legal fraternity and all those fortunate enough to have known him.*

14. *May his soul rest in peace.*

Shri Mukul Gupta

1. *I have had many long years of close connection with Shri Mukul Gupta, who lived a life of deep commitment to all those values of the profession which add lustre to one's life and to one's family too.*

2. *He touched all those who came into his fold with quiet strength, dignity and love. Born on 23 September 1956, he carried with him the values of his family, the legacy of his father, Late Shri Wazir Singh, Advocate, and the promise of a life devoted to service, learning and justice.*

3. *He was a man of remarkable intellect, but what made him truly unforgettable was the warmth which he carried along with his sharp intellect. After graduating from Delhi University in 1977 and completing his LL.B. in 1980, he entered the legal profession with determination and purpose. He began as an Advocate with the Delhi Bar Council, and through hard work, discipline and an unshakable sense of duty, he rose to become one of the most respected lawyers of his time in the Delhi Bar.*

4. *Trained under Ms. Sunanda Bhandare, a distinguished Judge of the High Court of Delhi, he became an Advocate-on-Record in 1987. Over the years, he appeared in matters of great importance and complexity, including the Parliament shoot-out case, *Selvi v. State of Karnataka*, the Jessica Lal murder case, the Red Fort shoot-out case, the Coal Scam, the Amazon-FRL dispute, and the *Toyota v. Prius* trademark matter. Yet, for all the importance of these cases, he never allowed success to affect the humility with which he always worked.*

5. *As Standing Counsel for AIIMS from 1995, and while representing the Ministry of Health, he rendered exemplary service. I have fond memories of having been briefed by him and of his studious and insightful briefings. We appeared in many High Courts during this period, and I must place on record the ineluctable engagement Shri Gupta always brought into his work. His compassion and empathy took him beyond rules and instructions.*

6. *As Senior Advocate, designated by the Delhi High Court in July 2010, he continued to serve with equal distinction in the High Court and this Supreme Court. He argued matters that shaped public life and public thought, but he did so with calmness, clarity and courage. I remember his work in the 2G case, the Uphaar Cinema matter, and the 1993 Bombay Blast appeals. During his tenure as Additional Solicitor General of India, he remained focused and deeply committed to the cause of justice.*

7. *As a member of the Ethics Committees of institutions such as AIIMS and PSRI, he contributed to the thoughtful intersection of law and medicine. He also shared his knowledge at lectures and forums, including at the University of California, Berkeley, where his presence left a lasting impression.*

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Reference made on 6th May, 2026

by

Shri Vikas Singh (Sr.)

President, SCBA

in the memory of

Late Shri Vijay Kumar Jhanji,

Shri A.D.N. Rao,

Shri Mukul Gupta and

Shri S.Balakrishnan,

Senior Advocates

Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India, Justice Suryakant; Hon'ble Judges of this Court; Learned Attorney General for India, Shri R. Venkataramani; Learned Solicitor General of India, Shri Tushar Mehta; Law Officers of the Government of India; Respected family members of Late Justice V. K. Jhanji, Late Mr. ADN Rao, Late Mr. Mukul Gupta, and Late Mr. S. Balakrishnan; Members of the Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association; Members of the Bar; Ladies and Gentlemen.

The fabric of our judicial history is woven not by the longevity of a career alone, but by the weight of the character behind it. We gather today to pay homage to four titans of our legal fraternity. We are here to remember lives that were not merely lived, but were meticulously engineered to serve the cause of justice. They represent the “quiet steel” of integrity that has fortified this institution for decades.

Shri Vijay Kumar Jhanji

We begin by remembering Hon'ble Mr. Justice Vijay Kumar Jhanji, a man who did not merely inhabit the office of a Judge but upheld it with a rare, steadfast resolve. In a world of legal flourish, he was a master of the concise; in an era of complex litigation, he was the architect of clarity.

On behalf of the Bar, I extend a warm and profound welcome to the family of Justice Jhanji. We are honored to have his sons, Mr. Vineet Jhanji and Mr. Amit Jhanji, and his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Ritika Jhanji, here with us. We also acknowledge Mrs. Neeti Jhanji and Mrs. Ekta Jhanji who are joining us virtually. Your family has not just supported a great judge but has also contributed two generations of advocates to this noble path, ensuring that the Jhanji legacy of legal service continues to breathe.

Justice V. K. Jhanji was born on 22 March 1944. His academic journey through the Anglo Sanskrit School and the corridors of Hindu College, University of Delhi, instilled in him a foundational discipline that shaped his years ahead. At Hindu College, his pursuit of Economics (Honours) sharpened that analytical edge that later became his judicial trademark: the ability to look at a complex dispute and immediately identify the economic and social reality underlying the legal friction.

After completing his LL.B. at the Campus Law Centre, he did not seek the immediate comfort of the capital's Bar. Instead, he moved to Ludhiana to train under his cousin, the late Mr. Mohan Lal Jhanji. This period proved formative. It is in the trial courts and civil chambers of Ludhiana that he encountered the "earthy" side of the law: where technicality meets practicality. When he enrolled with the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana in 1971, he carried with him a grounded perspective. He understood that behind every civil suit, taxation appeal, or constitutional writ, there was a litigant seeking an end to uncertainty. By 1989, his reputation for integrity and his precise command over civil and taxation matters led to his designation as a Senior Advocate.

Elevation to the Bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on March 15, 1991, marked the transformation of an advocate into one of the most formidable judges of his generation. If one were to ask the senior members of the Chandigarh Bar about Justice Jhanji's courtroom, they would invariably speak of his unmatched "Court Craft."

Justice Jhanji was famously intolerant to verbosity. He believed that if a point could not be made in five minutes, it likely wasn't a point worth making. He expected counsel to be "prepared to the hilt." He did not seek to be a "popular" judge; he sought to be a "just" judge.

To truly understand Justice Jhanji, one must recall the atmosphere of the mid-90s in Punjab. The state was emerging from a decade of turmoil, and the friction between executive power and judicial oversight was at its peak. It was in this crucible that Justice Jhanji's character was tested and revealed. When he sat in Court, he wasn't just deciding cases; he was reclaiming the space for civil liberties.

The **"Saini Case"** (Vinod Kumar v. State) was not just a criminal matter; it was a test of whether a High Court Judge could look a powerful police officer in the eye and demand accountability for "disappeared" citizens. Justice Jhanji did not flinch. In 1995, while hearing a matter involving an IPS officer, he faced what few judges ever have: direct threats to his life and the ransacking of his courtroom. An anonymous caller threatened to "throw him into a furnace." Most would have recused. Most would have looked for a way to dilute the heat.

Justice Jhanji did the opposite. He stood his ground with a "boldness" that remains legendary. He sought protection not out of fear, but to ensure that the majesty of the Court was not intimidated. He directed the CBI to act, unswayed by the "pompous" stature of the individuals involved. This was not fueled by ego, but by a deep-seated belief in the Habeas Corpus power of the court. For him, the life of an "ordinary citizen" was the ultimate measure of a democracy's health.

In December 2001, Justice Jhanji was transferred to the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir. It is often said that a judge's true caliber is tested when they are moved to a new jurisdiction with unfamiliar local laws. Justice Jhanji mastered the complex laws of the State with an ease that baffled his peers.

During his two tenures as Acting Chief Justice (2002-2004), he balanced administrative leadership with judicial brilliance. Yet his greatest gift to the people of J&K was the Full Bench judgment in **State of Jammu & Kashmir v. Dr. Susheela Sawhney**. At a time when the rights of women who married "outsiders" were being systematically eroded under the guise of local customary status, Justice Jhanji authored the majority opinion. He relied on the fundamental principles of equality. He held that a woman's permanent resident status, and the property rights flowing from it, did not vanish upon marriage. This judgment was a "significant milestone," a silent revolution that restored dignity to thousands of women.

His journey was a rare full circle; after ascending from the Ludhiana Bar to the height of the Bench across three High Courts, he returned to his roots at the Bar as a Senior Advocate of this Hon'ble Court, proving that a true man of law never truly retires from the pursuit of justice.

Whether during his subsequent tenure at the Himachal Pradesh High Court or his post-retirement years as a Senior Advocate before this Hon'ble Court, Justice Jhanji never changed his stripes. In the world of arbitration, where he was highly sought after, he brought that same "Jhanji speed": resolving disputes with a finality that saved parties years of litigation.

*Justice Jhanji believed that courts are institutions of memory. He did not care for the spotlight, but he cared deeply for the "institutional memory" of the Bench. He mentored his sons to respect the Bar, and his son Amit Jhanji, as Senior Standing Counsel, carries forward the same commitment to the public interest. He passed away on 23 February, 2026, at the age of 82. He lived a life that was "fair, unwavering, and committed." He leaves behind a legacy that says: **Be precise, be fearless, and above all, be just.***

May his soul rest in peace.

Shri A.D.N Rao

Senior Advocate Annam Durga Nageshwara Rao, affectionately known as A.D.N. Rao, was a pillar of the Bar whose life and career embodied the finest traditions of advocacy. His journey was marked not only by legal brilliance but by a rare gentleness of spirit, calmness, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the cause of justice. In him, the profession found a practitioner who elevated advocacy into an art of conscience, reminding us that the true measure of a lawyer lies not in the volume of arguments but in the depth of conviction and character.

The corridors of this Hon'ble Court are often filled with the thunder of ambitious arguments, but today, we gather to mourn the loss of a man whose presence was defined by a profound and echoing silence.

On behalf of the Bar, I extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Mrs. Annam Vijaya Sree; his brother, Mr. AT Rao; his daughter, Dr. Annam Vasudha; his daughter-in-

law, Mrs. Sri Soumya; and his granddaughter, Ms. Ditya Rao Annam. We particularly acknowledge his son, Mr. Annam Venkatesh, an esteemed Advocate-on-Record of this Hon'ble Court. In Venkatesh, we see the continuation of the same humility, discipline, and "first-generation" diligence that defined his father's journey from a young boy at The Frank Anthony Public School to the heights of the Senior Robes.

Born on 16 February 1961, in Tenali, Guntur district, to Shri Annam Subba Rao and Smt. Annam Kamala, ADN Rao was truly a child of the law. He moved to the capital with his father, who was himself a distinguished Advocate-on-Record. From his schooling at Frank Anthony to his graduation in Political Science at Sri Venkateswara College, he was a man of diverse passions. He was an ardent debater who won accolades for his college, a dedicated volunteer in the NSS, and the President of the Telugu Bhasha Parishad.

He returned to his roots for his legal education at Sir C.R. Reddy Law College in West Godavari, where he secured university ranks each year and graduated with First Class honors. Enrolling in 1987 and clearing his AOR examination in 1992, he began a career that would yield an incredible 393 reported judgments exclusively from this Hon'ble Court: a testament to a lifetime of industry.

A.D.N. Rao commitment to the law was inseparable from his commitment to the Earth itself. His mastery of environmental and public law was not merely a professional specialization but an instinctive personal value. For eleven years, he served as the Standing Counsel for the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), and later as the President of the NGT Bar Association.

He was the "friend of the court," the *Amicus Curiae*, in the most monumental environmental battles of our time: the M.C. Mehta cases, the T.N. Godavarman forest matters, and the illegal mining cases in Orissa, Karnataka, and Goa. It is not a mere coincidence that the M.C. Mehta matter reached formal closure immediately after his passing. His integrity also made him the natural choice for the CBI in high-profile matters like the Bihar Fodder Scam, Bofors, and cases involving former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

A.D.N. Rao was a "quiet, guiding figure" who mentored without expectation. We remember his characteristic "tug of the robe": a gentle touch on a junior's gown at the

podium, followed by a whisper: “You have driven the point. Let the Court process it”. In that single, soft touch, he imparted a lifetime of wisdom: that effective advocacy is about timing, rhythm, and respect for the Court’s intellect.

His credibility was such that it was famously remarked in open court that “there was perhaps no one in the room who could ever say ‘no’ to him”. This was not a tribute to power, but to the absolute trust he had built over thirty years of professional life.

His office, a modest space of less than 200 square feet, was an institution unto itself. There, one could witness three generations of his family working together in seamless respect. Despite the constant bustle, no one ever heard him raise his voice. He was a man of efficiency who loathed waste, once gently reminding a corporate leader that resources spent on unnecessary travel to Delhi could be better utilized elsewhere.

Beyond the law, his life was defined by a quiet, consistent altruism. He arranged yearly picnics for specially-abled children, introduced scholarships at his alma mater, and built a hostel ward in his mother’s name at CRR Law College. A devoted follower of Lord Venkateswara, he shared both his prasadam and his profound knowledge of flora and fauna with equal grace. Designated as a Senior Advocate in 2021, he remained a “truly fine human being” until the very end.

May his soul rest in peace.

Shri Mukul Gupta

We gather today in solemn remembrance of Mr. Mukul Gupta, Senior Advocate and former Additional Solicitor General of India. His career is marked by profound learning, quiet humility, and an unwavering fidelity to the Rule of Law.

On behalf of the Bar, I extend our deepest sympathies to his family present here: his wife, Smt. Sangeeta Gupta; his son, Mr. Tushar Gupta, Advocate; his daughters, Dr. Aastha Gupta and Paridhi Gupta, and their spouses. We also acknowledge the presence of his sister, Hon’ble Ms. Justice Mukta Gupta, former Judge of the Delhi High Court and Senior Advocate, in whom we see a vibrant reflection of the same legal values and intellectual pedigree.

Born on 23 September 1956, Mukul Gupta was truly a child of the law. He did not merely join a profession; he embraced a legacy of service associated with his father, the late Shri Wazir Singh, a respected Advocate. After completing his B.Com. from Delhi University, he faced a pivotal choice between Law and Chartered Accountancy. Acting on his father's counsel, he chose the path of the robes.

Upon obtaining his LL.B. in 1980, he was enrolled with the Delhi Bar Council and initially established an independent practice in taxation. Yet, the pull of the courtroom proved irresistible, and he soon ventured into the trenches of traditional civil and criminal litigation. His trajectory changed significantly in 1987 when he qualified as an Advocate-on-Record, having trained under the guidance of Justice Sunanda Bhandare. It was during this period that the Bar began to notice a practitioner who preferred "illumination over obscurity." Mukul was never one for courtroom theatrics; his strength lay in his composure and a clarity of thought that could distill the most complex disputes into simple, persuasive truths.

*Mukul Gupta's career was defined by matters of "profound public importance." As an AOR, he carried the weight of history in the Parliament Shoot Out case and navigated the complex intersection of science and civil liberties in the landmark **Selvi v. State of Karnataka**, which set the standard for narco-analysis in India.*

In 1995, his appointment as the Standing Counsel for AIIMS marked a transformation. For fifteen years, he defended the institution in critical matters, evolving from a generalist into a specialist in Education, Medical, and Administrative Law. Yet, his most enduring contribution is his pivotal role in the Ban on Smoking in Public Places. Mukul did not just defend this legislation in courts across the nation; he was crucially involved in its very drafting and passage. He understood the "human purpose" of the law, to protect the health of the silent majority, and the designated smoking rooms we see today are a direct result of his balanced approach to curbing passive smoking.

Designated as a Senior Advocate in July 2010 by the Delhi High Court, Mukul's practice reached its zenith when he appeared in the most defining trials of our era: the Jessica Lal murder case, the Red Fort shoot out case, the Coal Scam, the Amazon-FRL

dispute, and the international trademark battle between Toyota and Prius. As Special Counsel for the Union, he further served in the 2G case and the Uphaar Cinema matter, representing bodies like the MOHFW, Delhi Police, NIA, and CBI. As Special Senior Counsel for the CBI, he spent over six months meticulously arguing the 1993 Bombay Blast appeals before this Court. To sustain that level of rigor for half a year required more than just legal acumen; it required a physical and mental discipline, a “seriousness of commitment”, that very few possess. He believed a lawyer must be a “master of facts,” knowing that the law would follow naturally. He often remarked that a well-planned strategy could decide a case, sometimes requiring one to “lose the battle to win the war.”

During his tenure as Additional Solicitor General of India (appointed on 3 March 2014), he became the face of the Union in matters of national security and constitutional governance, including the Saradha Chit Fund case, the Nira Radia tapes, and the Subrata Roy Sahara matters. He never sought to “win” at the cost of the law; he sought to assist the Court in finding the right answer. He believed that conflicts between the government and counsel should be settled “in-house” with fairness and confidence, rather than being vented in public.

To the younger generation, he was a mentor who preached that “there is no substitute for hard work” and that one should strive for learning over financial gain. He viewed the legal profession as a mode of service, a tool for securing rights, interests and liberties.

Mukul was a torchbearer of the law. He upheld the finest traditions of the Bar through fairness, restraint, and grace. As we bid him farewell, we recognize that his departure is a monumental loss, but his memory will endure as a reminder that the Bar is at its finest when animated by the values he championed throughout his professional life.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Shri S. Balakrishnan

We assemble today to pay our collective respects to, Shri S. Balakrishnan, a titan of the Bar whose life was a masterclass in professional ethics and whose presence in this

Court for over six decades defined the very essence of “Excellence in Advocacy.” Popularly known to his vast circle of friends as ‘Baluji,’ and revered by generations of juniors as ‘Badei Sir,’ his departure leaves a void that is as much intellectual as it is deeply personal.

On behalf of the Bar, I extend a warm welcome to the family of Shri Balakrishnan. We are honored by the presence of his son-in-law, Hon’ble Mr. Justice Subramonium Prasad, Judge, Hon’ble Delhi High Court; his daughter, Dr. Akhila Prasad; and his grandchildren, Mr. Chaitanya Subramonium and Ms. Kaarunya Lakshmi. We also extend our deepest respects to his wife, Ms. Nirmala Balakrishnan, joining us virtually today. Perhaps the most profound testament to Shri Balakrishnan’s character was his steadfast belief in the fundamental equality of the Bar.

His grand-daughter shares that he was guided by a principled view: that the title of ‘Senior’ was an avoidable stratification in a profession he cherished as a community of equals. To ‘Baluji,’ the strength of an advocate lay in the weight of their arguments and the integrity of their conduct.

Born in 1938 in Thorapadi, Tamil Nadu, Shri Balakrishnan’s journey to the pinnacle of the Indian legal system was marked by a rare intellectual depth. Having completed his schooling at DTEA School, Mandir Marg, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Khalsa College in 1958. This scientific foundation gifted him the “analytical precision” he later brought to the law; he viewed a legal brief much like a scientist views a complex element, something to be distilled to its core essence.

Enrolling as an advocate in 1962, he began his career in a crucible of excellence. He had the distinct privilege of working under Shri V.K. Krishna Menon, and later associated with Ramamoorthy & Co., working alongside luminaries such as Shri R.K. Garg, Shri M.K. Ramamoorthy, D.P. Singh, and Justice S.C. Agarwal. Thereafter, he joined the Chamber of Shri N.C. Chatterjee, a renowned Senior Advocate. Subsequently, he formed a partnership with Shri Ghatate called Balakrishnan & Ghatate.

In 1965, he became an Advocate-on-Record and was designated as a Senior Advocate by this Hon’ble Court in 1998. Shri Balakrishnan became a synonymous with

expertise in Service Law, where he contributed to numerous landmark judgments and served as the trusted Standing Counsel for the Bombay and Madras Port Trusts for many years.

As an advocate, he was regarded as an “exceptional draftsman.” He firmly believed that persuasion lay in precision rather than volume. His arguments were concise and effective; he never resorted to theatrics, earning the unwavering respect of both the Bench and the Bar. He proved that advocacy is best advanced through substance rather than display.

Beyond the courtroom, Shri Balakrishnan was a man of vast spiritual and intellectual horizons. He served the legal fraternity by revising the seminal work “Professional Ethics for Lawyers – Changing Profession, Changing Ethics.” His compassionate worldview was reflected in his book “Cow – A Celestial Being,” and his deep spiritual engagement led him to author works on the “Science of Lalitha Sahasranamam” and “Vishnu Sahasranamam.”

For the younger members of the Bar, Lawyers’ Chamber No. 104 was a sanctuary. Shri Balakrishnan’s door was always open. He was a “friend, philosopher, and guide” who mentored without any reservations, teaching that a lawyer’s greatest asset is their character. His “radiant smile” and warmth of personality turned clients into lifelong friends. In the passing of Shri S. Balakrishnan, we have lost a noble soul who proved that one can reach the zenith of professional success while remaining a gentleman of immense kindness.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

To the young lawyers joining us today, look at their journeys of the departed souls.

None of them relied on “flourish” or “rhetoric.” They relied on the “nobility of labor.”

They embodied the “highest traditions of the Bar and the Bench”: a phrase we use often, but which in their cases, was a literal description. They were bridges between the old-school discipline and the constitutional challenges of the 21st century.

We bid farewell to the departed souls who believed that the law is a “solemn calling.” Their lives are a testament to the fact that while judges may demit office and advocates may leave the well of the court, their commitment to justice never retires.

May the Divine grant their souls eternal peace. Their advocacy will remain our guide, and their courage will remain our inspiration. May their memory continue to inspire generations to come.

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Reference made on 6th May, 2026

by

Hon'ble The Chief Justice of India

Justice Surya Kant

in the memory of

Late Shri Vijay Kumar Jhanji,

Shri A.D.N. Rao,

Shri Mukul Gupta and

Shri S.Balakrishnan,

Senior Advocates

My esteemed sister and brother Judges; Shri R. Venkataramani, Attorney General for India; Shri Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General of India; Additional Solicitors General; Shri Vikas Singh, President SCBA and other Office Bearers of the SCBA; Shri Vipin Nair, President SCAORA and other Office Bearers of SCAORA; Secretary General, Supreme Court of India and other members of the Registry; Distinguished Sr. Advocates and other members of the Bar; and Most respected family members of the Late Senior Advocates and legal luminaries, whom we fondly remember here today.

1. We gather here this morning not only in the solemn observance of loss, but also in an act of collective remembrance. A recognition of the simple truth that those who have given themselves to the law do not merely occupy its chambers for a season. They instead become part of its very fabric.

2. As we know, Courts are institutions of memory. Every day, we speak of precedent. We draw strength from reasons written before us. We take guidance from those who carried the law with dignity in their time. A Full Court Reference is that same institutional memory expressed in a human register. It is the Court pausing, in gratitude, to say that the law is not made only by statutes and judgments. It is also made by character, discipline, fairness, restraint, courage and service.

3. Today, we pay tribute to four legal stalwarts: Justice Vijay Kumar Jhanji, Shri Annam Durga Nageshwara Rao, Shri Mukul Gupta, and Shri S. Balakrishnan-Senior Advocates of this Court, each of whom adorned the legal profession by the sheer quality of their devotion to justice, and each of whom leaves behind a legacy that this institution will carry long into the future.

Justice Vijay Kumar Jhanji

4. Justice Vijay Kumar Jhanji embodied the principle that the institution must always stand above the individual. Born on 22nd of March 1944, he pursued his legal education at the Campus Law Centre, Delhi University, and began his practice in Ludhiana under his cousin, late Shri Mohan Lal Jhanji. What followed was a career of cumulative distinction.

5. He built a formidable practice in civil, constitutional and taxation matters at the Punjab and Haryana High Court, earning his designation as Senior Advocate in 1989. Elevation of Justice Jhanji as an Additional Judge of that High Court in 1991, and confirmation as its Permanent Judge in 1992, were the natural recognition of a legal mind already widely respected. He subsequently served the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir as an Acting Chief Justice on two occasions.

6. It was there that Justice Jhanji authored one of his most enduring contributions: the Full Bench judgment in ***State of Jammu and Kashmir v. Dr. Susheela Sawhney***, which held that a daughter who is a permanent resident of the State does not forfeit her rights in property, public employment or scholarship merely upon marriage to a person who is not a permanent resident of the State. In a time when gender equality in constitutional jurisprudence was still finding its full expression, that judgment stood as both a legal landmark and a statement of principle.

7. After his retirement in March 2006, he continued to serve this Court as a Senior Advocate until 2023, carrying the authority of the Bench into the wisdom of the Bar.

8. We are today joined by his sons, Mr. Vineet Jhanji and Mr. Amit Jhanji, and by his daughters-in-law Ritika Jhanji and Ekta Jhanji. His wife, Mrs. Neeti Jhanji, and his grandchildren-Nirvaan, Navya, Rohan, and Rishaan-join us in spirit and through virtual presence. To them, we convey the Court's deepest condolences, and the assurance that his name and his judgments shall endure.

Shri A.D.N. Rao

9. Moving forward to Shri Annam Durga Nageshwara Rao, another legal visionary who has left us too soon. He was born on the 16th of February 1961 in Tenali in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, to a family already rooted in the law; his father, Shri Annam Subba Rao, was himself an Advocate-on-Record before this Court. But his son went on to not only carry that tradition forward, but transform it entirely.

10. He cleared the Advocate-on-Record examination in 1992, and his specialisation in environmental and forest law, combined with a deep personal passion for nature, found its fullest expression in the continuing mandamus proceedings that define this court's environmental jurisprudence. He was *Amicus Curiae* in the **T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad case**, in **M.C. Mehta v. Union of India**, in the **Goa Foundation case**, in the **Karnataka and Orissa illegal mining matters**, and in the **Elephant Corridor case**. He was therefore, in the truest sense, a central figure of this Court's green jurisprudence.

11. And yet, what those who knew him best, remember, is not the reported judgments, but the unreported kindness. Anecdotes I have had the pleasure to read about the storied life of Shri Rao, have illuminated how he was effortlessly restrained, perceptive, and always aware that the most powerful argument is one that trusts the Court's intelligence.

12. He was also, by every account, a man of extraordinary personal generosity. He instituted scholarships at his alma mater. He arranged for the construction of a hostel ward at his college in the name of his late mother. Each year, without fail, he organised an outing for children with disabilities, quietly, from his own means, without announcement or acclaim. When he was designated as Senior Advocate by this Court in 2021-it was a recognition that came late only in timing, not in merit.

13. He departed this world on the 25th of February 2026, aged sixty-five, far too soon. We are honoured to be joined today by his wife Smt. Annam Vijaya Sree, his son Mr. Annam Venkatesh, Advocate-on-Record of this Court- who now carries his father's legacy before the very institution that his father shaped-and his daughter Ms. Vasudha, his daughter-in-law, and his granddaughter Ditya. To them and to his extended family, we offer our profound condolences and our deep respect.

Shri Mukul Gupta

14. Shri Mukul Gupta was born on the 23rd of September 1956, in a family well-

and Kaarunya. His wife Smt. Nirmala Balakrishnan joins us from home through virtual presence. To this family, and to all who mourn his passing, the Court offers its solemn and sincere condolences.

24. Ladies and gentlemen, there is a belief, shared across our ancient traditions and the common law, that what a person truly builds is not what stands in stone or statute, but what endures in others. The four distinguished members of our fraternity whom we remember today came to this institution along different paths, served it in different capacities, and left it better than they found it.

25. On behalf of this Court, and of the Bar that learned from them, stood beside them, and was shaped by them, we honour the memory of Justice Vijay Kumar Jhanji, Shri A.D.N. Rao, Shri Mukul Gupta, and Shri S. Balakrishnan. Their voices may no longer be heard in these corridors, but their influence will remain.

May their souls rest in eternal peace! Om Shanti.

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List of Attendees at the Full Court Reference

- ❖ *Shri R. Venkataramani,*
Ld. Attorney General for India.
- ❖ *Shri Tushar Mehta,*
Ld. Solicitor General of India.
- ❖ *Shri Vikas Singh, (Sr.)*
President,
Supreme Court Bar Association.
- ❖ *Shri Rahul Kaushik, (Sr.)*
Vice President,
Supreme Court Bar Association.
- ❖ *Ms. Pragya Baghel,*
Hony. Secretary,
Supreme Court Bar Association.
- ❖ *Shri Vipin Nair,*
President,
Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association.
- ❖ *Shri Amit Sharma,*
Vice President,
Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association.
- ❖ *Shri Nikhil Jain,*
Hony. Secretary,
Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association.

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*Family Members of
Late Shri Mukul Gupta
Senior Advocate
at the Full Court Reference*

- ❖ *Ms. Sangeeta Gupta, Wife*
- ❖ *Mr. Tushar Gupta, Son*
- ❖ *Ms. Mansi Jain, Daughter-in-law*
- ❖ *Ms. Paridhi Gupta, Daughter*
- ❖ *Mr. Udit Gupta, Son-in-law*
- ❖ *Dr. Aastha Gupta, Daughter*
- ❖ *Mr. Ankur Gupta, Son-in-law*
- ❖ *Ms. Mukta Gupta, Sister*
- ❖ *Ms. Nitya Gupta, Niece*
- ❖ *Mr. Anuj Agarwala, Nephew-in-law*
- ❖ *Mr. Vibhor Garg, Nephew*
- ❖ *Mr. Brijesh Garg, Brother-in-law*

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THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

New Delhi - 110001

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