

**Justice S.J. Vazifdar**  
Acting Chief Justice  
Punjab & Haryana High Court



Chief Justice's Bungalow  
# 35, Sector 4, Chandigarh-160 001  
Tel : 2740880 (O), 2749770 (R)

No. 26/CJS  
August 05, 2015

*Dear Mr. Punchhi,*

A Full Court Reference was held on 03.08.2015 at 04.00P.M. to condole the sad demise of Mr. Justice Madan Mohan Punchhi.

I enclose herewith copies of the condolence messages.

With regards

Yours sincerely

*S. J. Vazifdar*  
(S.J. Vazifdar)

**Mr. Ashu Mohan Punchhi**  
#160, Sector 8  
Chandigarh.

**Enclosures: -**

- (i) Copy of the Reference made by the Full Court.
- (ii) Copy of the Reference made by Additional Solicitor General of India.
- (iii) Copy of the Reference made by Advocate General Haryana.
- (iv) Copy of the Reference made by Additional Advocate General on behalf of Advocate General, Punjab
- (v) Copy of the Reference made by Chairman, Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh and
- (vi) Copy of the Reference made by President, Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association, Chandigarh.

**Full Court Reference on the demise of Hon'ble Mr. Justice Madan Mohan  
Punchhi, former Judge of this Court and former Chief Justice of India  
Dated 03.08.2015 Time: 4.00 P.M.**

1. My esteemed brother and sister Judges; former Judges of this Court; Shri Satya Pal Jain, Additional Solicitor General of India; Shri Baldev Raj Mahajan, Advocate General, Haryana; Shri Alok Jain, Additional Advocate General, Punjab; Senior Standing Counsel of U.T., Chandigarh, President, Secretary and Executive Members of the High Court Bar Association; Chairman and Members of the Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana; Senior Advocates; other members of the Bar; Officers and Staff of the High Court; Family members of Late Justice M.M. Punchhi; Ladies and Gentlemen.
2. We have assembled here to pay homage to late Justice Punchhi, who left for his heavenly abode on 17.06.2015.
3. Justice Punchhi, former Judge of this court and a former Chief Justice of India was born on October 10, 1933 in District Montgomery (now in Pakistan).
4. He did his early schooling at Sacred Heart Convent, Amritsar. On partition, his family migrated to India and settled at Ferozepur (Punjab). He graduated from the D.A.V. College, Jalandhar. In 1955, he obtained a Law Degree and Certificate of Proficiency from the Delhi University.
5. Justice Punchhi joined his father's Chambers at Ferozepur. Early in his career, he argued successfully a criminal appeal which even his father considered to be a difficult case. That must have heralded his successful career first as a lawyer and then as a Judge over the next more than four decades.

6. After practicing for three years at Ferozepur, he set up his practice in this Court in the year 1958. His practice in this Court for 21 years involved a variety of fields - revenue, land tenures, writ petitions as well as criminal matters. He was the Standing Counsel for the Chandigarh Administration.
7. On 24.10.1979, he was appointed as an Additional Judge of this Court and was made a permanent Judge of this Court on December 16, 1982. Justice Punchhi was elevated as a Judge of the Supreme Court of India on 06.10.1989. He became the Chief Justice of India on 18.01.1998 and retired on 09.10.1998. Justice Punchhi delivered several landmark judgments during his tenure as Judge of this Court as well as of the Supreme Court of India.
8. Justice Punchhi was appointed as the Chairman of the Centre-State Relations Commission which was set up to look into the new issues of Centre-State Relations. Within a short span of time, the Commission submitted its recommendations in a 7-volume Report to the Government on March 30, 2010.
9. The legal fraternity perceived him as a kind hearted and patient Judge, who encouraged young lawyers. In the earlier eighties, with arrears piling up by the day, the then Chief Justice Mr. Justice S.S. Sandhawalia entrusted Justice Punchhi with a criminal roster to tackle the menace of mounting arrears. His approach was intrepid. It had severe ramifications and an attempt was made on his life at his residence in 1985 and yet again in 1986. He, however, relentlessly continued handling the criminal roster.

10. While in the Supreme Court, he was again entrusted for a considerable period of time to be on the criminal roster as the mounting arrears was becoming a cause of national concern. Disposal of cases became the norm.
11. That he was a successful professional and a distinguished Judge is one thing. His achievements were, however, enhanced by his multifaceted personality, his varied interests and his adherence to sound principles and traditions.
  - A) It was his love for the soil and his affection towards poor farmers and the underprivileged, which inculcated in him qualities of kindness, sincerity, affection, thoughtfulness and a humane approach.
  - B) Also academically inclined, he was a part-time Lecturer in the Department of Law, Panjab University, Chandigarh.
  - C) He was an avid reader. He had read the Vedas, Upanishads and the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharat and others scriptures as well. His contemporaries and friends recount till date how he would apply the principles enumerated in various scriptures to solve complex problems. He possessed a remarkable ability to recite Sanskrit *Shalokas* and Urdu couplets, many of which found their way in his judgments too. But he could move with equal ease and pleasure from reciting Sanskrit *Shalokas* and Urdu couplets to delighting his children with the ever popular songs of yesteryear such as – ‘*Qe sera sera*’.
  - D) His adherence to the great traditions of our country manifested itself in simple but significant acts. Like the great

mathematician Ramanujan, in keeping with the traditions of our culture, he did not forget to respect his teachers and acknowledge his indebtedness to them even after he rose to the highest office in the judiciary.

For his oath ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, Justice Punchhi ensured the presence of his only surviving teacher Sister Declan from the Sacred Heart School, Amritsar and proudly introduced her to the then President of India.

12. With the demise of Justice Punchhi, we have lost a multifaceted person who excelled in whatever he did, every role he played - as a father, as a Judge, as a lawyer and as a human being. As his children tell us, like a good parent, he shared the benefit of his knowledge and experience with them. His family had the benefit not only of a loving and dutiful parent but the wisdom of a parent with an open mind combining the best of everything.
13. His son-Mr. Ashu Mohan Punchhi, an Advocate of this Court and daughter-in-law Mrs. Pooja Punchhi were living with him and cared for him till he passed away on 17.06.2015. Justice Punchhi has two daughters, Madhu and Priya, both law graduates, who are married in Chandigarh. His elder daughter Madhu is married to Shri Pawan Kumar Mutneja, a practicing Advocate of this Court- and his younger daughter Priya is married to Shri Sanjay Tandon, an entrepreneur in the service industry. Justice Punchhi's elder son Amit Punchhi married to Preeti, is the CEO of an American Company.
14. His life's journey is best summed up in the opening paragraph of his daughter Priya Tandon's moving tribute to her father in The Tribune,

who she so lovingly and devotedly refers to as the umbrella over her head:-

“From being the lone boarder in a convent school at the tender age of five to a refugee at a camp in post-partitioned India --- From one amongst many in a large joint family nurtured solely by his erstwhile father to chairing the highest seat in judiciary as the Chief Justice of India ... From being a farmer at heart and a judge by intellect ... From being ‘Maddi’ to his parents and ‘My Lord’ to the legal world ... Justice Madan Mohan Punchhi had come a long way.”

15. Mr. Justice Punchhi delivered several landmark judgments during his tenure as a Judge of this Court as well as the Supreme Court of India. As he passed on from this world to the other, the words he penned almost a quarter of a century ago resonated in one of the courtrooms of the Supreme Court in a case which we are all familiar with. It was a poignant farewell from the Court that he was a member of with such distinction for almost nine years.
16. On behalf of my colleagues, the staff of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana and on my behalf, I place on record our heartfelt condolences to the members of his family. May God give you the strength to bear this great loss. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

(S.J. VAZIFDAR)  
Acting Chief Justice,  
Punjab & Haryana High Court,  
Chandigarh.  
03.08.2015

As a mark of respect to the departed soul, we shall  
now stand in silence for two minutes.