Introduction of Hon'ble Justice Mr. B. N. Srikrishna by Mr. Bharat Doshi on the occasion of the Eighteenth Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture on 3rd August 2012

Good evening friends,

It is my privilege and honour to introduce Hon'ble Justice Mr. B. N. Srikrishna, Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, today on the occasion of the annual Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture, eighteenth in the series.

When our friend, Mr. S. Venkiteswaran, Senior Advocate, approached him to deliver the Lecture, he very gracefully and very readily accepted. Sir, the Trustees of the Lalit Doshi Memorial Foundation are grateful to you.

While introducing the speaker, I have made it a convention of not reading out the speaker's detailed or abridged biography. A shorter version is already included in the invitation card. However, I do want to share some lesser known stories and insights, some discovered while scanning the net, some conveyed by common friends, and some of the stories which I learnt in my two precious conversations I have had with Justice Srikrishna during the last two months.

I came across a write up about Justice Srikrishna in which he was referred to as Polymath - A person of great or varied learning – and a Polyglot - A person having a speaking, reading, or writing knowledge of several languages. He speaks at least seven languages fluently.

Justice Srikrishna in addition to being a legal scholar and a jurist, is deeply interested in philosophy, culture, music and education.

Justice Srikrishna holds a master's degree in Sanskrit, a diploma in Urdu and a post-graduate degree in Indian aesthetics.

As a scholar of aesthetics; obviously led him toward the fine arts. He learnt Carnatic music on the Violin. Of course in today's forum we will not be able to enjoy his expertise on this aspect.

Few people know that he pursued the study of Law as a matter of challenge his father posed before him. His first interest, after completing his B.Sc. with Physics as major, was to pursue atomic energy in the footsteps of Homi Bhabha. If he had pursued Physics, who knows probably today he too would have been one of those who hunted for the “God's Particle”.

One evening at the dinner table Justice Srikrishna's father, who himself was a formidable legal luminary, conveyed that he did not believe that Justice Srikrishna would excel at law. He said - you need a super intellect to be a

lawyer. Those words were enough to spur Justice Srikrishna and he told his father – Ah, if you can be a lawyer, then I can be a better lawyer. His father turned to him and said - It is easy to talk but difficult to show it in practice. Next day in the morning Justice Srikrishna went and enrolled himself in the law college.

During my discussion with him on his present assignment as Chairman of the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission, we diverted to discussing several Commissions that he had headed in the past.

His name is synonymous with the Commission of Inquiry – The Srikrishna Commission – a one-man Commission to go into the riots that shook Mumbai in 1992-93. The gruelling proceedings of the Commission continued in a highly charged environment over a period of five years till 1998.

He was the Chairman of the Committee that advised the Government on the demand for separate Telangana and of course I must also mention that he headed the Sixth Pay Commission and he submitted his report within the stipulated time of 18 months.

As we talked about these Commissions and Reports, it so turned out, the Report on Mumbai riots was rejected, the Report on separate Telangana was shelved, and the only Report, out of these three, which was implemented expeditiously by the Government was the Sixth Pay Commission Report.

When I requested him to think about his experience as a one-man Commission on the Mumbai riots and give me a quote which I could use in my speech, he said *"One of my favourite quotes is from Cicero – the Roman lawyer who says, 'Pusillanimity (which means cowardice) is no virtue in a Roman'. He added, I think it is no virtue in an Indian too"*. It is necessary for every lawyer and every judge to be courageous, apart from knowing the law, and knowing the value system in the society. Justice Srikrishna epitomises these qualities of a learned and courageous Judge.

His deep interest in philosophy, culture and education blends well with his supremacy in the study of Law and Jurisprudence. He has chosen to speak today on "Judicial Activism", a topic well debated in Jurisprudence and much prominently observed in the recent past.

Sir, we all await your speech later this evening.

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