

# A legal giant who kept the flame of liberty alive



Ashwani  
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In the passing of Fali Nariman, India has lost a legal luminary, who, in testing times, kept the flame of liberty and freedom alive by his fearless advocacy of the nation's liberal and libertarian conscience.

Apart from his powerful advocacy and defence of human rights on several occasions, in and outside the courts, his contribu-

tion to the Supreme Court's constitutional jurisprudence impinging on several other important issues, particularly those concerning the accountability of constitutional power, is etched in the national consciousness.

His sterling qualities of head and heart earned him the respect of not only his close colleagues but of all those who came into contact with him. My association with Fali started when we appeared on the opposite sides in the Bhopal gas leakage case, in which Mr Nariman was representing Union Carbide. Even though I

was much junior to him at the Bar, he was unfailing in extending professional courtesies to me.

He had recently contributed a blurb for my latest book, released in December last year. On one of my visits to his residence a few months ago, he presented me with a copy of Lord Hailsham's handwritten book, a rare book indeed.

I was reluctant to let Fali, as all of us at the Bar affectionately addressed him, part with this prized possession but he insisted with his irresistible affection. This book, on my desktop, remains as a liv-



In this January 5, 2024 file photo, Supreme Court senior advocate Fali S. Nariman delivering the 28th Justice Sunanda Bhandare Memorial Lecture in Delhi. — PTI

ing memory of a privileged association with a fine human being with a large heart.

Despite his professional

preoccupations, Fali never missed a sitting of the Rajya Sabha, of which I was also a member during a part of his tenure. He

had a strong sense of public duty and was ever willing to sacrifice personal interest for a public cause.

Frugal in his ways, never ever to flaunt wealth or status, he was upright, humble, affectionate and compassionate. His sharp intellect sometimes made him irritable with legal submissions or drafting mistakes, but his displeasure never lasted more than a few minutes. And he was always forgiving of inadvertent mistakes.

During my last conversation with him, a few months ago, he was concerned about the state of our politics and the

nation. A gentleman to the core, Mr Nariman, the jurist, parliamentarian and humanist, will be sorely missed. He will, of course, live in our imagination through fond memories of a life lived to the full.

The nation's high civilian honour, the Padma Vibhushan, conferred on Fali Nariman for his public service, makes him a part of the nation's collective consciousness.

Farewell, Fali. May the Lord Almighty rest your soul in peace.

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