

## Some gangsters made me famous...

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### **"In court I'm not a woman; I'm an advocate."**

I am not scared of dealing with the underworld. People have threatened me out of frustration but I never get perturbed. There was a man from Lakshar-e-toiba who would often tell me in court, 'you're a woman; you have no heart...' I would calmly tell him that in court, I'm not a woman; I'm an advocate. I have gained this cool temperament after years of experience. It's not like I'm not cautious. As a prudent woman I should be, because I am doing work, which is a little out of the ordinary.

### **"You die only once..."**

I'm a very simple person. After work, I walk home, without security even though I deal with dangerous people on a daily basis. I am not worried because my conscience tells me I have done no wrong. But I prefer walking alone because I don't want someone else's life to be in danger. If at all it has to happen, no problem. You only die once but I don't want to live like I'm dying every moment.

### **"Some gangsters made me famous..."**

I got a few 'glorified' cases, but to me, all cases are equal. But I have to admit that some gangsters made me famous. Take for instance the JJ Hospital shoot-out case; Subhash Singh Thakur, a Dawood henchman, was the accused. I had a tough time getting on with this trial as there were 27 accused. There was tremendous pressure on me and it was dangerous as eight accused were shot down during this trial. Thakur was sentenced to death and the police department recognised me as someone who could deliver the goods.

### **"I became famous with those inside the jail..."**

Being a defence lawyer is a pre-requisite to being a prosecution lawyer. I worked as a defence lawyer for 10 years, but I'm very bad at extracting money! [Laughs] I've conducted many matters including the first Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) matter in Greater Mumbai. I became famous with those inside the jail because I got many acquittals. I was not interested in prosecution initially, but I was brought on as a Special Public Prosecutor based on merit. I was the legal aid in the first matter of TADA and that's when people probably recognised me. But taking me on under TADA was recognition of sorts.

### **"I give credit to the state government..."**

In the initial stages, no one used to take me seriously, even as a defence lawyer. But you can't criticise people for that attitude; you have to prove yourself. In 2001, I was appointed as Public Prosecutor. I still am Special Public Prosecutor under TADA, MCOCA, and POTA. I give credit to the state government that an outsider was given a chance to do something. There were a few people who criticised my appointment saying I was a non-Maharashtrian but the government stuck to their decision. I complete 24 years as a lawyer in August this year.

### **"Nobody takes you seriously unless you prove your mettle..."**

There are many young women in criminal law now as compared to earlier. Entering is very easy but sustaining yourself in this profession is difficult. You have to be tough. Nobody takes you seriously unless you prove your mettle. But as a woman, you have to struggle a little more to make an impression. Today, we are losing our nationalism. We only talk about our rights; we don't talk about our duties. We have to find a balance somewhere.

### **"I don't want to lose my sensitivity as a woman..."**

I've never cried in court but outside, I've broken down several times. When I'm dealing with criminals, I don't want to lose my sensitivity as a woman. I am not as emotional as earlier but I do want to empathise with our fellow human beings. Being humane is very important to me.

### **"It makes a difference when an ordinary person tells me I'm doing a good job..."**

I don't think I'm a very successful lawyer — monetarily I am not and I don't regret it. Performance-wise, I feel I have achieved a little but there's a lot more ahead. It makes a whole lot of difference when an ordinary person tells me I'm doing a good job. It is important that

society believes in the judiciary and the law enforcement machinery.

