



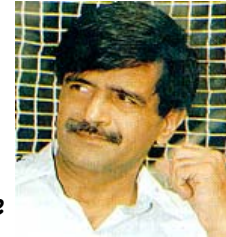
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Information Entertainment Online

## The judge who took on Parliament and politicians

Shiv Narayan Dhingra, son of migrant labourer, former newspaper boy, radio mechanic, street vendor, tuition master, odd-job hack...



Now lord of Karkardooma court in Delhi -- the additional sessions and Terrorist And Disruptive Action (Prevention) judge.

Known all over by the unflattering sobriquet of the Hanging Judge...

Probably the most-feared judge in the capital -- there just isn't any arguing that politicians, especially of the controversial variety, would give their eye-teeth to avoid him -- Dhingra started attracting public attention from the day he showed former Union minister H K L Bhagat, accused in a riot case, his place.

The *namaste* which the haughty politician hurled at the judge's head was first met with stony silence -- and then, when Bhagat persisted with it, a sharp snub. Later, fearing that the minister would intimidate witnesses, Dhingra refused him bail and sent him to prison. From where, it took a thoroughly-abashed Bhagat, numerous court visits and bail applications, to free himself.

Then had come the Fish Market Episode which took the battle right into the enemy's camp -- in this case, Parliament. Dhingra compared it to a fish market -- and the public loved him for it.

Dhingra, the public hero, was made.

The Kalpnath Rai drama, episode number one followed. Again the judge was unrelenting and, well, cut Rai down to size. The former Union minister, who soon found himself shuttling between Tihar jail and the Karkardooma court, was a much reduced man when bail was granted.

Rai, who had contested and won election to the Lok Sabha from jail, recovered from his Tihar experience. And had been making the most of his life.

Till Dhingra stepped in again on March 17 and sentenced him for harbouring underworld goons, to 10 years in prison.

So, what is it that Dhingra feels for politicians? Contempt? No, not really. 'I don't have contempt for them. I can't stand double standards, whether of politicians or anyone else,' 48-year-old Dhingra told one interviewer last year.

**B**orn two years after Independence to Punjabi migrant labourer Karamchand and his wife Ram Bhai, Dhingra had a hard childhood. He is not ashamed of his humble beginnings. Nor, as in many cases, does he boast about it. For him it is just a matter of fact. Nothing more -- nothing to tout or hide.

"We never had a permanent abode. We kept moving all over Delhi, always living in one-room tenements." he reminisces. Dhingra started going to school at his mother's insistence -- and she a lady who could hardly read Hindi!

"I studied in Delhi's municipal schools, in the Hindi medium, of course," he says. But when his mother gave birth to four more brothers and two sisters in quick succession, the family found Karamchand's Rs 60 income a day just too meagre. And Dhingra turned part-time professional, doing anything that came his way.

Luckily, his education did not suffer. He did well in his secondary school examinations and, with money which his parents raised by pawning the family gold, went for an engineering diploma. "I ceased being a financial burden to my parents when I was 17," he says, "But the jobs I got weren't good; the pay was bad and the work frustrating. Then I realised that I wouldn't be able to write any competitive exams without a degree. "

So he started studying part-time for a science degree. Later he went for the law. "I started practising, simultaneously with studying company secretaryship and editing the *Matrimonial Law Reporter*," he recalls.

It took him just six months to build up his practice. In 1985 he became a part-time lecturer at the Delhi University which occupation he continued till he was appointed sessions judge in 1988.

"If all the judges in the country were like him (*Dhingra*)," says Delhi special public prosecutor Y P Singh , "the country would be saved in two days!"

There aren't many who would disagree. Except, maybe, Kalpanath Rai.

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