

THE LEGACY OF PROFESSOR VED NANDA

“You have been my friend. . . . That in itself is a tremendous thing.”¹

It is hard to know where to begin when trying to capture even a bit of Professor Ved Nanda’s essence. He contained multitudes, each of them worth praise and remembrance. I will leave the recounting and celebration of his extraordinary professional life outside the law school to others, although I could say volumes about that. Professor Nanda’s legacy at Sturm College of Law is indelible. He personified the mission of the Ved Nanda Center for International and Comparative Law by “Inspir[ing] excellence in international law teaching, scholarship, and practice among faculty, students, alumni, and friends of the University of Denver Sturm College of Law,” and “encourag[ing] stimulation, promotion, and dissemination of quality writing and research materials in the field of international legal and comparative law studies.”²

For decades, Ved shared his profound knowledge of international law with Sturm College of Law students, leaving an enduring mark on the institution. His classes were more than just lectures; they were journeys into the intricate world of global legal affairs, guided by a teacher whose passion was as contagious as it was enlightening. In addition to being a tremendous teacher, Ved was a great mentor to me and to many others over the more than two decades I knew him.

Despite his extremely busy professional life, Ved took his role as a mentor to his colleagues and his students immensely seriously and prioritized it. Somehow, he always found time to chat and provide advice and discernment (once he got wind of your request; email was not his thing). Ved had the special talent of being able to cut to the core of whatever issue you needed help with by asking insightful questions and listening fully. Remarkably, he could make you feel like you had figured out the flaws in your argument all by yourself, when really, he had subtly led you there. Always self-deprecating, Ved had the rare talent of setting you straight without making you feel like an idiot. He would challenge you when necessary, give advice when warranted, and sit back and let you figure it out for yourself when needed.

As a mentor and as a friend, Ved’s sense of humor was always present. Many of the areas that Ved taught in and wrote about dealt with serious and difficult topics—human rights law issues are not often a happy source of conversation. Despite that, in the midst of challenging discussions and intense moments, Ved could always find some comic relief. He

1. E.B. WHITE, *CHARLOTTE’S WEB*, 164 (1980).

2. *About Us: What We Do*, THE VED NANDA CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL & COMPARATIVE LAW, <https://www.law.du.edu/nanda-center/about-us> (last visited Jan. 30, 2024).

knew that humor was not a diversion from serious conversations, but a powerful tool to foster connection, ease tension, and create an environment where learning and growth could flourish.

Ved was a truly selfless person. He had no agenda other than to help, which was clear from his life's work. As one of his students said "Professor Nanda is the warmest, kindest, and most knowledgeable professor in the school. He brightens the room when he walks in. His ability to communicate clearly, and his knowledge of the subject of international law, especially human rights, is unfathomable." Ved was many things to many people and will be sorely missed by all.

*Celia Taylor**

* Professor, University of Denver Sturm College of Law; Director and Nanda Chair, Sturm College of Law International Legal Studies Program.