

REFERENCE

to
KARL J KHANDALAVALA
(January 23, 1996)

We meet this morning to pay tribute to a man who may be described as a man for all seasons: Mr Karl Khandalavala was, indeed, an outstanding lawyer but this was but a small facet of a towering personality. To most of us in the legal profession where we confine ourselves to the narrow and, sometimes, stifling world of the law, he stands out as a sterling example of what the complete man should and ought to be. In that sense he was truly a renaissance man: there was little that did not catch his interest, and he excelled in what interested him.

During the Second World War he was an airman with the R.A.F. until the Lancaster in which he flew crashed into the sea. He returned to the Bar to accept the post of Judicial Magistrate; and with the establishment of the City Civil Court he formed, together with Honavar, J C Bhat and Shelat (the last was destined for the Supreme Court) a glorious quartet: they made that court the equal of, if not superior to, most High Courts in the country.

When Mr Khandalavala resigned he returned to criminal practice of which he would come to be considered one of the foremost practitioners, first as a defence counsel and then as chief prosecuting counsel for Customs, FERA and other fiscal offences. His legal acumen was acknowledged when he was asked to assist the J C

Shah Commission, a duty he discharged with great ability and total dedication.

So much for the law: I believe Mr Khandalavala would himself have liked to consider that part of his life ephemeral when compared with his abiding contribution to the world of art. Considered one of the foremost authorities on Indian art, particularly bronzes, he played a key role in developing the collections of the National Museum, Delhi, and the Lalit Kala Akademi of which he was Chairman and Fellow; and was Hon Editor of its publications on Indian art for over 35 years.

He authored innumerable publications on art: but the most memorable must surely be the monumental "Pahari Painting". And the most inspiring, his discovery of the talent of the now legendary Amrita Shergill on whom he wrote a monograph. In addition, Mr Khandalavala was an archeologist of repute and a photographer of international renown (to my embarrassment, when I was proudly displaying some amateurish portraits I had done and I was asked to show them to Karl, I had ignorantly enquired: "Why, is he also knowledgeable about photography?").

~~Art and law coincided when as a lawyer he pursued over three~~
continents the famous and invaluable Nataraj that was smuggled out of the country: it was entirely due to his efforts that it was traced to the Norton Simon Collection and a settlement reached for its eventual return to India.

His greatest testimonial is the Prince of Wales Museum of which he was the Chairman for 35 years: to the Museum he gifted his priceless collection of Indian art which any museum in the world would be proud to possess.

And amidst so much Karl Khandalavala could find time to be a superb cook and a most innovative gardener: on a personal level I have lost a friend whose unbounded hospitality I have enjoyed in his gracious homes in Pune and Mahableshwar.

The Bar, and particularly the Bombay Bar Association, of which he was a distinguished member, shall remember him not only with pride but with the greatest warmth and affection.