

LATE SHRI P. G. PHADKE, ADVOCATE

We regret to record the death of Shri P. G. Phadke, Advocate, on the 5th September 1975. Shri Phadke had visited the High Court the previous day to attend to a Criminal matter which had been listed for the day. The case however was not reached that day and while Shri Phadke was preparing to go to the High Court the next day the sudden and fatal heart attack brought to an abrupt end a life full of zest and vigour. Off and on in the near past Shri Phadke had been ailing and he had on several occasions told his friends that he was prepared for death. In the District Court Library Building it was a treat to be in the company of Mr. Phadke and friends and enjoy a cup of tea prepared under the guidance of Thombre the Library clerk of the District Bar Association. Shri Phadke was at his best in the Art of Cross Examination and his services were availed of in several important cases. With the passing away of Shri Phadke a void has been created in the District Bar at Nagpur which it will take years to fill.

A reference to condole the death of Shri Phadke was held in the Court room of Masodkar and Shimpi JJ. on the 9th of September when Lawyers had gathered in large number to pay their homage. Opening the reference Shri V. M. Kulkarni the President of the High Court Bar Association referred to the life of Shri Phadke and his achievements at the Bar. After Shri M. M. Qazi, Additional Government Pleader and Shri P. V. Holey for the Bar Council of Maharashtra had spoken of the outstanding qualities of Shri Phadke, Shri Justice Masodkar addressed as follows.

“Mr. Kulkarni the President of the High Court Bar Association, Mr. Qazi Additional Government Pleader and Mr. Holey, Member Bar Council and Members of the Bar, I join you all on behalf of my personal self and my brother Judges of this Court to express our sense of sorrow at the sad demise of Mr. P. G. Phadke, one of the senior and respected member of this great Bar.

As you recalled, Mr. Phadke was born on January 1, 1904, and his family hailed from Bhusaval. He had education at Jabalpur and Nagpur. Having joined the Bar in 1932 and after the formative period of his profession, he steadily rose in the high position of an ever-sought-after lawyer. He was concerned throughout his long and active professional career with the activities of the Bar Association, wherein he held responsible offices off and on. Though he practised on both civil and criminal sides, he had attained eminent position as one of the best cross-examining advocate and was engaged in almost every matter of consequence. In the former State of Madhya Pradesh and thereafter in Vidarbha and Chhatisgarh, he was invariably retained to conduct many a sessions trials involving serious offences. In High Court too, he appeared and made a mark by his acute sense of advocacy. He was endowed with a personality and qualities of strength and vigour that paid him rich dividends over a period of forty years in this profession.

In the death of Mr. Phadke, both Bench and the Bar here, have lost an advocate of unique qualities. In his towering personality there was such a fusion of artistry, a very deft drama and a fine and creative resourcefulness, that like of him would be hard to find. Though he practised at appellate as well as trial Court levels, essentially he was cut to be a great lawyer holding spell bound the stands of the Courts of Sessions, case after case. He was simply superb in the forensic art of cross-examination. Whether it be a Sessions Trial involving murder, rioting or rape or whether it be a firing case enquiry or an election petition or a civil cause of greater consequences wherein the metal of the witness was to be shaken, it was Mr. Phadke who was sought after and engaged to cross-examine the witnesses. The secret lay in his bold, buoyant and brilliant approach. That gave him meteoric rise in practice, which he owed to his meticulous method of study and a gift of miraculous memory. Hardly he would have stepped in the Court without full and complete study of facts and if it be a crime, without personal inspection of the scene of offence. Having mastered the first and primary material of the case, he would stand like an archer in the Court shooting questions after questions with spectacular speed. He could, because of this, forhent his opponents and win the battle for his client. Seemingly fool-proof case many a times under his battery shattered. Witnesses after witnesses were shaken by Mr. Phadke by the sheer force of searching questioning. Being in firm grip of the intricacies of fact and law, he could spin out questions after questions leading the witness either to blind alleys or to the point of no return. At the end of the questioning, many a sturdy witnesses stood flabbergasted, fumbled or fully exposed. Worst the case and gruesome the crime, best was the talent displayed by his defences. It was all, therefore, a treat and lesson to watch and hear Mr. Phadke and even to oppose him in cases or work with him to perceive the process of precision and the steel that made him a great advocate.

He unmistakably loved the details and ever seemed to gain by it. Devout sense of study and disciplined training enabled him to be a successful lawyer. Like a scientist or a surgeon, he had zest for probing the truth in a law case. He shunned despondency and ever offered confidence by his tone and bearing not only to his clients but to his colleagues. His deep sonorous voice, his red robust face and his erect frame was as if meant to be the incarnation of supreme confidence that a practising advocate can possess. With all the outward grim and sometimes overpowering, in the company of friends and colleagues, he was a lively, jovial and sociable personality.

He practised with sense of dignity, sense of pride and dispensed all the best of his own art. Though ailing for the last few years he never lost the touch and thread till last of his life work. The profession has been rendered poor, indeed, by his sad and sudden departure.

Human life, after all, is a wavelet on the lake of eternity. It has however elements that make for eternal. With mortal frame endowed to us one can scale the glistening heights of immortality. Given unto man is the pearl of life that takes shine and shed from his actions and deeds, his sense of object and purpose. Fully lived and finely assessed, it becomes a meaningful saga and not

“a tale told by an idiot” or fleeting shadow of sensuous existence. Indian mind looks to the marvel of life with such supreme sense and gives to it sublime touch of permanence. To us it is an extension of ever unfolding and ever-existent phenomenon. It is an occasion, an opportunity and a duty to do utmost of one's ability. The *Upanishadas* teach us that “the soul of man is immortal. The body is subject to the law of growth and decay”. But the indwelling qualities transcend the dimensional forces of disease and death. The life lost has, therefore, to be assayed on the touch-stone of the qualities that it stood for and its content so that those who are in the pilgrimage of this noble profession draw their lessons and follow the footprints.

Therefore, as we grieve the sad demise of this brilliant and robust member of the Bar, we are sure that he has left something eternal and immortal treasure-house of his qualities from which the budding generations of the practising lawyers and all those who defend the cause of justice would draw strength and inspiration. Those are the gifts unto eternity and the cold icy hand of death cannot rob them off.

With all this I record our sense of condolences and convey our feelings on this and sad occasion to the bereaved members of the family of Mr. Phadke.

May the parted soul rest in peace.

The Court shall now observe standing a minute's silence in token of homage to the parted one.

We share the sorrow of the members of the family of Late Shri P. G. Phadke and pray that his soul may rest in peace.”

The proceedings ended after the assembly observed a minute's silence.

We offer our heart felt condolences to the Daughters of Late Mr. Phadke.
