Dear Friends,

It is a rather difficult task to talk about a person like Kaka (Komalji, my father) in the past tense. After a month, it still seems so unreal to all of us at Jodhpur - indeed, it must be so, to a lot you too. All of us do so very much, miss his overpowering but reassuring presence. One still feels he’s out for a visit and will be back soon.

Many of you have visited our home at Jodhpur. Today, as you come into the driveway, you come face to face with a large pile of stones; Stones from the demolition of part of our old house. The ground opens up into an empty space where Kaka planned to build a hostel of some sort. The space is there, but the house which was for many years my grandparents’ home is gone - You can feel the vacuum. Aptly, this also seems to be a physical manifestation of what has happened. Painstakingly, one will have to go about building the house again.

Last month, when I got a mail from David/Carol telling me about this program\(^1\) I intended to try and attend it and meet all of you who have worked or dealt with my father at some point in time. While I share a close personal rapport with many of you, I would have liked this opportunity of meeting so many others who knew him.

All of us, especially my mother Indiraji, would like to thank you for this gesture and also for the numerous thoughtful messages of condolence that we received.

Komalji, as most of you refer to him was quite a repository of indigenous knowledge. He was one of the pioneers in the documentation of performing arts in India and a vocal exponent of the oral traditions of history. He did extensive work on Rajasthan’s folk music and culture. Instrumental in making archival recordings of folk musicians of Rajasthan, he exposed them and their art internationally. How did he achieve this? Certainly not alone - he built on his own experience and knowledge through the numerous discussion that he had with colleagues like you. He was able to make the lateral connections that he was so famous for, by interacting with people of different disciplines and absorbing their know-how. It was such interactions that brought the familiar twinkle to his eyes.

Let me dwell briefly on the last few months of Kaka’s life. It was in the summer of 2002 that Kaka discovered that his old tryst with cancer wasn’t over. The disease was back and there really wasn’t much that could be done about it. At this point in time he was working on a fresh idea - that of setting up an ethnographic museum. He tried some chemotherapy and also a course of radiation which helped ease his pain a bit. He even tried some non-conventional remedies and was in and out of hospital a number of times. He really wanted to go a long way further. The museum had become his passion and he wanted to see his dream come true. Sometime last year, after following up with the Government for almost a year, we were allotted a piece of land to set up this museum. It is a very picturesque locale at the edge of a stony plateau with a small enclosed valley. Kaka was thrilled with the location. Every visitor who came to see him would be told about his plans for the museum and taken to the site. Without saying so, he was building up on his ideas for the project. He would sit late into the night jotting down points related to some aspect or the other of the project and be woe betied if anyone delayed anything related to it.

The museum of his dream aims at to have objects of daily use rather than curios. It will relate the story of the creative ingenuity of the common folk by tracing the history of tangible cultural objects and the role they play in their daily life. Kaka thought out a lot of what he wanted to achieve and uncharacteristically, documented it.

Kaka also in the last few months worked for creating a structure for the organization - Rupayan. He knew that it would be very difficult to take his plans to fruition in the absence of an organisation. In furtherance of this objective he created a new executive council of Rupayan comprising of some young energetic people. All of us now have a common objective to strive towards - the completion of his museum. We also realize that what we are trying to achieve is difficult because our effort lacks the benefit of the continuity of Kaka’s intellectual output - but that is what makes it so much more of a challenge. We also intend to draw on the same resource base which helped hone his knowledge - all of you. To this end, we shall be circulating a brief concept note on the museum. We would like to invite expressions of interest towards involvement with the project. We would also like you to freely provide us, as feedback, your thoughts on the issue.

\(^1\) Memorial conference at Columbia University. For report see page 5.