

**Ghandinesen Kanapathipillai**  
**(8<sup>th</sup> June 1942 – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012)**



Ghandinesen was born on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1942 in Raub, Pahang and was the second of seven children. His father was a Special Grade Hospital Assistant in Raub Hospital and his mother a housewife. Besides a year in Kuantan and Klang respectively, his formative years were in Raub.

He went to school at the famous Mahmud School in Raub. From a young age Ghandi showed a strong will, leadership qualities and an all-round talent in sports. He was naturally appointed a school prefect and represented his school in hockey, football, cricket, basketball, rugby and athletics. Ghandi was also an outstanding student. He completed his Senior Cambridge Examination in 1959 and was the sole Indian grade 1 student in Pahang that year.

Ghandi's ambition was to be a doctor or lawyer. However, lack of sponsors and the need to financially assist his family led him to pursue another noble career, teaching. He applied and was accepted for teacher training in Malayan Teacher's College, Penang ('MTC') in 1961. Ghandi excelled in his training and graduated in 1962.

Ghandi's sporting abilities were again in demand in college and he represented MTC in hockey, cricket, football and basketball. His team mates included a number of national players representing the country in these different sports. Despite the presence of such sporting talent, in his final year, Ghandi was named cricketer of the year, which was one of the coveted awards for sports in the college. Ghandi was very proud of his time at MTC. Later as a lawyer, he always displayed his MTC plaque beside his law certificates in his office.

Ghandi commenced his teaching career at his alma mater, Mahmud Secondary School Raub, where he taught Science, English and Physical Education from 1963 to 1967. Although he was one of the younger teachers, Ghandi's authoritative and imposing presence led to his appointment as the school's discipline teacher and prefect master. Ghandi's knowledge in sports and his ability to inspire the students also made him the perfect appointment as the school's sports secretary in 1964. During his tenure, the school experienced its golden era of sports as Mahmud School won many sports titles in the state of Pahang.

Whilst teaching, Ghandi continued his prowess on the sports field. He represented the district and state in hockey, cricket and basketball. In his early twenties he was entrusted to hold the post of Honorary Secretary of both the Pahang Cricket and Hockey Associations.

In 1967, during a period of school inactivity caused by the 'Work To Rule' (National Union of Teachers' decision to protest low wages by refusing to be involved in any administrative or extra-curricular activity in school) Ghandi rekindled his yearning to do law. As form six night classes were not available in Raub, Ghandi decided to move to Klang to obtain his Higher School Certificate.

Ghandi applied successfully for a post as a teacher at ACS Klang and moved to Klang in 1968. He taught Maths in ACS Klang from 1968 to 1980. Ghandi coached the school hockey team, leading them to numerous titles. His eye for talent led him to convince a young footballer to reluctantly play hockey. This young man excelled as a hockey goalkeeper and went on to represent the country in the Olympics and World Cup.

Though generally feared by students in school, his commitment to their academic success and his sincerity earned their respect and love. His headmasters and colleagues found him to be very personable and dedicated, holding him in very high regard. This was evident by his election as President of the Staff Fraternity in ACS Klang.

When he moved to Klang, Ghandi became involved in numerous sports, community and social activities. He joined the Klang Coast Club and later the Royal Klang Club, both social and family clubs. Ghandi was also an active member of the Klang Apex Club, a community service club. He was instrumental in the club's community projects, notably setting up the Sg Pinang Orphanage in Klang and providing bursaries for schools in Klang. Ghandi was further involved in the Hindu Youth Organisation ('HYO') and was President of the Klang HYO in the early 70s. During his three year tenure he introduced Deepavali caroling in Klang and organised the National HYO Convention in High School Klang, which was a major event in the day.

Ghandi's involvement in sports was extensive both as a player and an official. He played hockey for Klang in the tough Selangor Division One hockey league and captained the Klang cricket team (Klang Cavaliers) in the Selangor league. Ghandi was an outstanding 'Class 1' national hockey umpire. He was a member of the Selangor Hockey Association

Umpire's Board and Disciplinary Board. He later sat on the Disciplinary Board of the Malaysian Hockey Federation.

Ghandi's commitment to these organisations and its activities initially distracted him from his original goal of pursuing law. However, driven by his desire to offer his family a better life, Ghandi eventually pursued his ambition to become a lawyer. In 1978 he sat and passed the Higher School Certificate Examination on his first attempt. Then in late 1980, at age 38, he left for UK to read law. Leaving for UK was a difficult decision as it required him to resign his post as a teacher and be away from his wife and three children. However at the time, this was the only available option to study law.

Ghandi read law at the University of Buckingham and graduated with a second class upper honours degree in 1982. He passed the bar exams in one sitting and was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1984. Ghandi completed his pupillage under the late Anthony Fernandez in Klang and was admitted as an Advocate & Solicitor of the High Court of Malaya on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1985. Ghandi's call ceremony was presided by his good friend, Justice V.C. George (as he was referred to then), and was a unique and memorable affair. The ceremony was held on his 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday and he alone was called in this court. The courtroom was packed with his family and friends, and the ceremony was vibrant and light-hearted.

Ghandi began his legal career in Anthony Fernandez & Partners, Klang before founding his own law firm in 1987 called Kuhan & Ghandi, which eventually became known as Badri Kuhan Yeoh & Ghandi. The firm initially opened two offices, one in Kuala Lumpur and the other in his home town Raub. However despite residing in Klang, Ghandi did not open an office in Klang at the time, as he honoured the request of Anthony Fernandez not to compete with his firm.

Ghandi worked very hard to ensure the success of his budding firm. Though he was shuttling between two offices, his main emphasis at the time was the Raub office. Ghandi would be based in Raub every Mondays to Wednesdays as well as any other day in the week if need be. The Raub community remembered Ghandi and his family well and warmly welcomed back one of their own with pride and warmth. Ghandi loved practicing law in his boyhood town and thrived there.

Being in a small town, Ghandi's areas of legal practice were widespread. He was involved in civil and criminal litigation as well as corporate and conveyancing matters.

He particularly handled land and family matters in addition to drafting timber concession agreements and joint venture agreements.

Ghandi was especially known for helping the less fortunate. His Raub office was akin to a legal aid centre where many from the lower income groups would go to for legal advice and assistance. He never turned them away and would take up their cases for little or no fee in return. He was an excellent 'mediator' and often mediated family disputes with great success.

In 1994, after the closure of Anthony Fernandez & Partners, Ghandi opened an office in Klang. He then concentrated his efforts in Raub and Klang before being permanently based at the Klang office in 1997. In Klang Ghandi would concentrate on his corporate and conveyancing practice, and by now his knowledge of land law and trust was particularly extensive and in-depth.

Ghandi was strongly committed to maintaining the traditional values of integrity, independence and professionalism expected of the legal profession, values which he would pass on to numerous pupils in his firm. He taught them that legal practice was a profession and not a business. He also stressed on continuing legal education. One of the first things he would tell his pupils were that they were now no longer law students but students of the law. He encouraged his pupils to always keep a journal of notes on current development of the law. His emphasis on continuing education as well as his ability to impart knowledge and impress values on pupils was reminiscent of his days as a teacher.

It must be said that even pupils attached to another master in the firm refer to Ghandi as their de facto master. And they all held him in high regard. When Ghandi once appeared before a former pupil who was then a member of the judiciary, before he could introduce himself she instantly stood up and said "Sir how are you". Many former pupils would regularly call him, some for advice on legal and personal issues whilst others simply to keep in touch or to wish him on his birthday. There are many stories of former pupils who, when a matter from Ghandi's firm is called up or announced in court, would later run up to the firm's lawyer simply to enquire about him. Ghandi clearly left a strong impression and long-lasting influence on all his pupils.

Ghandi strongly believed in the struggles of the Bar and readily participated in the Bar's protests against injustice, such as the Judicial Crisis in 1988. Ghandi remained active in sports throughout his legal career, and represented the Malaysian Bar in hockey and

cricket. He always encouraged his pupils and lawyers to be active in the Bar either in its events and activities or in doing legal aid work.

Finally, after ensuring his children had graduated and his family financially secure, Ghandi decided to ease off working life for the first time since 1963. In 2001 he withdrew from managing the Klang office and gradually ceased active practice, assuming a consultancy role in the firm. The advent of Parkinson's disease eventually led to his retirement from practice in 2009. His career spanned 18 years as a teacher and 25 years as a lawyer.

Ghandi was married to Ruba, with whom he had a wonderful relationship. They complemented each other perfectly and looked after the other with great love and passion. The 38 years they spent together was nothing less than a great testament of love. Sadly, Ruba passed away from cancer on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010. A part of Ghandi departed that day too.

Ghandi was very much a family man and dutifully performed his role as a son, brother, husband, father and grandfather. He was an exemplary role model and loving man to his family. He always challenged and motivated them to be the best they could and inspired them to reach great heights.

Ghandi also made friends easily. His witty personality and strong character endeared him to everyone irrespective of age, standing, race or religion. He had many pockets of friends with interesting nicknames. There is Dad's Army, Afternoon School, Thursday Lunch Group, Pensioner's Club and many more. Whenever Ghandi was present, good conversation, plenty of laughs and a generally good time were guaranteed.

Ghandi was diagnosed with a heart condition in 2001 and Parkinson's disease in 2009, but successfully treated and managed these illnesses. However, he was then diagnosed with cancer at a terminal stage in late 2011. Unbelievably, the disease spread rapidly and his condition deteriorated swiftly. He succumbed to the disease on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012, surrounded by his family and loved ones.

Ultimately, Ghandi was never the same the moment his wife became terminally ill. Ghandi and Ruba were truly two hearts that beat as one, and her passing left a void in his life that he would never recover from. He is finally with her now.

Ghandi leaves behind his three sons and daughters-in-law, five grandchildren, a loving extended family, a host of adoring friends, cherished memories and a legacy of values.

*“ Life is never measured by the years we live or the wealth we possess, but by the caring, cheer and love we share and the people whose hearts we have touched.”*

May His Soul Rest In Peace.