

Generosity and Grace : A Tribute to Chaman Kashkari (rev)



When I met Chaman first time, some thirty-five years ago, he was an icon of low-key and self-effacing personality. Knowing him more over time I found him, additionally, caring and compassionate. He was interested in things beyond his profession: mankind and arts. Just two years ago he told me that he wanted to return to Kashmir and become a sadhu. Though he lived in a practical world, his soul resided in humanity.

Chaman Kashkari passed away in Stow, Ohio, on March 23, 2017. He was 83 years old.

He was born on August 27, 1933, in Srinagar, Kashmir, India, to Sudharshan and Sidhilakshmi Kashkari.

He studied B.A.(J&K Univ.) and then B.E. (Electrical Engineering) at Pillani

Engineering College, both in India. He got a job with General Electric Company in Calcutta, India. He rose to number two position. After a couple of years he was transferred to U.K.

Later, he migrated to U.S. in 1963. He studied for Masters in Electrical Engineering at University of Detroit (1966), then went to University of Michigan for Ph.D. in the same field (1969). In 1969 he joined the faculty of University of Akron in Electrical Engineering. and retired in 1994 as Emeritus Associate Professor. His primary focus was research in the technology of obtaining water and electricity resources in the villages of Africa, India, and Nepal. He wrote a book: Energy - Resources, Development, and Conservation - India.

The high point in the recognition of his professional achievements came in 1990, when President H.W.Bush of U.S. gave him Presidential End Hunger Award at White House.

At the time of his retirement from University of Akron in 1994, along with his wife, he founded a \$50,000 endowment for encouraging women to study engineering, as women's participation in the field in the world is low. It is called Drs. Chaman and Sheila Kashkari Family Scholarship for Women in Electrical Engineering.

Chaman married Sheila Dhar in 1963, a medical doctor, who graduated from Lady Harding Medical College, New Delhi. She specialized in pathology. She worked in Akron City Hospital as a Pathologist until 2001, when she retired.

His oldest child, daughter, Meera Kashkari Kelley, is a medical doctor. Her daughter, Emma, is the only grandchild he had.

His other child, Neel, is President of Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Financial Stability under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, in 2008 - 2009. He ran for Governor of California in 2014, as a Republican, losing to Jerry Brown, a Democrat.

Chaman founded Saigal Society in honor of the great Indian singer. It was inaugurated in Jammu, where Saigal was born, by Farooq Abdullah, who used to be the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Its aim was to honor the singer and perpetuate his art. Chaman also founded another organization to give awards to the great singers of India.

Chaman was larger-than-life in the sense that his interests went beyond his profession. He was fundamentally a humanitarian. He was moved by the plight of people, the tragedies that life inexorably brings to human beings. He was generous in his financial and time resources to help human causes. His heart never closed. He was of spiritual disposition, removed from the materialistic lust that today's man is enthralled in. He was always thinking of starting this or the other humanitarian project and of giving awards to artists. He was truly a noble man.

Chaman's duel with the world is over - especially with his health in the last few years - he now belongs to the eternity. Those who knew him know that he is still with them, will always be.

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