



Dr. Narinder S Kapany

1926 - 2020

His Legacy Lives on...

Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, widely known as the father of fiber optics, passed away peacefully in Woodside, California on December 3rd, 2020.

In 1953, working alongside Harold Hopkins at Imperial College London, Dr. Kapany was the first to successfully transmit high quality images through fiber bundles. He coined the term “fiber optics” in a famous 1960 article for *Scientific American*. “When light is directed into one end of a glass fiber,” Dr. Kapany wrote, “It will emerge at the other end. Bundles of such fibers can be used to conduct images.” His breakthrough achievements helped create a foundational element of the internet age, affecting the lives and businesses of everyone around the world.

Born on 31st Oct. 1926 in the town of Moga, Punjab-India, Kapany grew up in the Himalayan foothill city of Dehradun and graduated in 1948 from Agra University, later receiving his doctorate from Imperial College London in 1955. He married Satinder Kaur, and the couple soon migrated to the United States where he first worked at Rochester University and then at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago.

In 1961, the couple moved to Woodside where Kapany founded Optics Technology Inc. successfully taking it public in 1967. He was the first Sikh Indian to take a company public in Silicon Valley. The San Francisco Examiner, in February 1969, described him as “...the most dashing corporate officer in the area”. Subsequently, he founded Kaptron Inc. in 1973, which was later acquired by AMP Inc. In 1999, he was named one of seven “unsung heroes” in Fortune magazine’s “Businessmen of the Century” issue.

Dr. Kapany wrote four books on fiber optics and entrepreneurship. His seminal research in fiber optics, lasers, and solar energy, and their applications in bio-medical instruments, defense, communications, and pollution-monitoring earned him more than 100 patents. In 1979, Dr. Kapany created the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurial Development at the University of California Santa Cruz where he also later endowed a Chair in Opto-Electronics. He was also a Regents Professor at UC Berkeley, a visiting scholar at Stanford University and served on the Board of Trustees at both the

University of California Santa Cruz and Menlo School. A member of numerous scientific societies, Dr. Kapany was a fellow of the British Royal Academy of Engineering, the Optical Society of America, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Dr. Kapany was a noted philanthropist, deeply committed to championing Sikh culture and language. He created the Sikh Foundation in 1967 which pioneered the display of Sikh arts at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC and at the Rubin Museum New York. He established the first permanent Sikh art gallery in the United States at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and in Canada at the Montreal Museum of Art. In noting those accomplishments, Dr. Nikky-Guninder Singh, who chairs the Department of Religious Studies at Colby College, commented that the Sikh world has “lost a visionary leader and a passionate promoter of our art, history, culture and literature.”

Dr Kapany received numerous awards including The Excellence 2000 Award from the USA Pan-Asian American Chamber of Commerce in 1998, the Pravasi Bharati Award by the Indian Government in 2008, an Honorary Doctorate by the Guru Nanak Dev University, the Fiat Lux Award by University of California in 2008 and the Asia Game Changer West Award in 2019.

Narinder Kapany was a man of enormous intellect, boundless energy and a lovely loud and infectious laugh. His passionate commitment to science and Sikh art left an indelible impact. His limitless curiosity, ferocious engagement in most everything and his delightful laughter added light and warmth to the world. He spent the last year writing his memoirs, *The Man Who Bent Light*, and we hope to make that available by spring 2021.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Satinder Kapany and is survived by his son Rajinder Singh Kapany, daughter Kiran Kaur Kapany, and his four grandchildren Ariana, Misha, Tara and Nikki.

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