



HDF-THANKS SCHOLARSHIP

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Established 2021



Professor Shaukat Ali Chaudhary, PhD;

Scientist, Botanist.

Born March 1, 1931, died: March 31, 2020



Golden Shield Awarded by the Saudi Arabian Royal Family in 2000, photo in 2016.

Shaukat Ali Chaudhary was born in Sialkot, Pakistan, and died in Sydney, Australia, after a two-year battle with Lymphoma/Leukemia. Shaukat was the fourth of 9 siblings born to Punjabi landowners (also known as zameendars). His father, Chaudhary Allah Rakha, and his mother, Resham Bibi, were family pioneers in entrepreneurship and prioritized education for their eight sons. Neither of Shaukat's parents was literate, but with their keen sense of business, they established a thriving construction company, Chaudhary Allah Rakha and Sons.

The way he told it; he fell in love with science at an early age. After an unpleasant first grade interaction with a foolish, bullying Religious Studies teacher at the Scotch Mission School, six year old Shaukat decided that religion was a tool to suppress intellect and critical thinking. While trying to copy some religious text (they used quills and inkwells back then), little Shaukat had accidentally spilled ink on his uniform shirt. The teacher slapped and humiliated Shaukat and sent him home to change his shirt. Shaukat walked out of class and instead went into the science classroom. The teacher told Shaukat to come in and sit down. He reassured Shaukat that, sometimes, messy mistakes happened, and that was part of being a scientist.

And so it unfolded that the keenly intelligent, relentlessly curious, and diligently perfectionistic young Shaukat embarked upon an 80-year adventure in seeking the mysteries and beauty of the scientific world. Shaukat began to observe the plants in his environment and loved the experiments where the class would grow plants from seeds.



Young Shaukat in the microscope lab, University of the Punjab (undated)

Shaukat wanted to become a teacher and to discover the mysteries of how plants came to be in so many different shapes and sizes, and species. He breezed through his studies skipping several grades, and, at age seventeen, Shaukat graduated as the highest scoring student in the Class of 1948 at Murray College.

Shaukat was the first-ever double gold medalist in Punjab, excelling in two Masters of Sciences programs in 1954 from Government College of Arts and Sciences at The University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, where he studied mycology (fungi) and taxonomy (plant genetics) under the scientific mentorship of Professor Sultan ul Abedein.



University of the Punjab, 1959, Acceptance Speech of Gold Medal Award

Shaukat's first faculty position was at The Agriculture University in Faisalabad, Pakistan. He began as Lecturer at age 22 and within five years was promoted to Head of the Department in Botany. During his time there, he also served as Director of Student Affairs, Chairman of the Scholarship Committee, interim Head of Zoology, and faculty advisor for the Men's Field Hockey team.

During these years, Shaukat was selected as one of five Pakistani scholars to collaborate with Nippon University scientists to scale K2, the second tallest mountain in the world, in the Himalayan Mountain Range.

Throughout his early career, Shaukat had many adventures. This included expeditions to the Sunderban Forests in Bengal, where the group narrowly escaped a full-sized adult Bengal tiger attack; the Karakorum Highway, where he

camped for an entire year on the banks of the beautiful Lake Saiful Mulook; and the sandy stark heat of the Baluchistan Desert of Pakistan.



During his expedition and time living in the Northern Pakistan outpost mountains of Kaghan, near the turquoise waters of Lake Saiful Malook, Shaukat had grown a full beard, looking like a true mountain man!

In 1959 Shaukat was awarded a UNESCO scholarship to study Arid Zone Ecology in the Blue Mountains of Australia. He traveled there via an unpressurized bi-plane, which was so memorable that even decades later, he described the harrowing five-day journey in minute details. His expedition for specimen collection in the mountains involved two years living out of a tent and subsisting on the land. It was during this time that Shaukat fell in love with the enchanted landscape and unique flora of the Australian continent.

Shaukat went on in 1963 to complete a Ph.D. in two years. Yes, that is not a typographical error. Two years. Upon returning from Australia, Shaukat's work earned him a Young Scientist Scholarship Award from the Pakistan Government which provided an opportunity for Shaukat to pursue a Masters of Sciences at the College of Agriculture, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.

Being the optimistic, diligent, and perfectionistic overachiever that he was, Shaukat requested and was granted approval to attempt a Ph.D. in those two years. In later years, he shared many dramatic (and possibly a little exaggerated) of what it was like to work feverishly, surviving on endless cups of teas, and sleeping only four-hour each night, trying to pass his Russian language courses. Back then, a foreign language class was required for a Ph.D., which Shaukat recalled that he managed to pass after realizing the similarity of the grammatical underpinnings of grammar between his mother tongue Punjabi and the Russian language.

Shaukat operated with characteristic focus and drive, establishing a strict schedule so that he could work relentlessly around the clock, excepting a 4-hour window when he slept.

Such was his tenacity that Shaukat did, in fact, successfully defend his Ph.D. thesis in 1962 under the advisory of Professor Gregory Swanson. It was during his time in Pullman that Shaukat was inducted into the academic honor society Phi Beta Kappa.

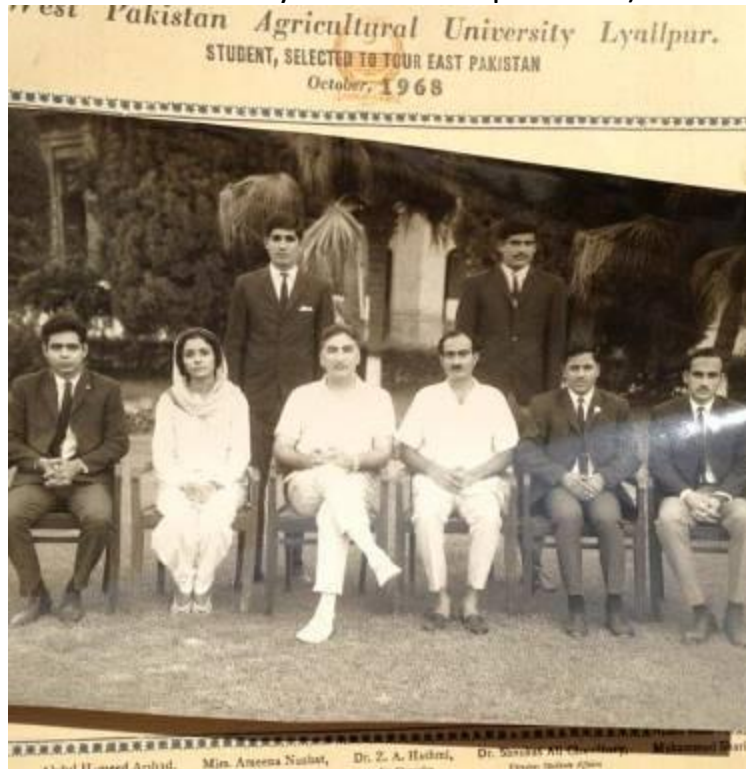


Newly minted, Dr. Shaukat Ali Chaudhary at his PhD Graduation Washington State University, Pullman, in Spring of 1963

During these two years, Shaukat also developed a love of American culture: he brought home dozens of vinyl records of late 1950's artists, including Peggy Lee,

Connie Francis, Doris Day, and Jim Reeves. He also perfected his skills in the art of grilling a steak (which he served topped with orange slices, sprinkled with black pepper, and garnished with sprigs of mint.)

Out of homesickness, Shaukat learned to cook Punjabi meals – he conjured up childhood memories of watching his mother in the kitchen, and “replayed those memories” to replicate the sequence and ingredients of his favorite dishes, Pullao (a delicately fragrant rice cooked in a chicken broth) and Alloo Gosht (a light, broth-based curry of lamb and potatoes).



Pakistan Agriculture University Left to Right: Prof. Arshad, Miss. Amena Nuzhat, Chancellor Z. A. Hashmi, and Prof. Shaukat Ali Chaudhary.

Dr. Chaudhary returned to the Agriculture University of Faial Abad, Pakistan, was promoted to Assistant Professor and continued as Department of Botany Chair until 1971. During this time, he published his first complete textbook, The Flora of Lyallpur. Shortly thereafter, he was vigorously recruited to join as a tenure track Assistant Professor in Lebanon at the American University of Beirut.

During his eight years there, Dr. Chaudhary founded the highly respected Botanical Herbarium at the American University of Beirut, a repository of all the plants in the middle eastern region, ranging from northern Syria to east Jordan

and south of Gaza in Palestine. His research in Lebanon focused on Iris species, and he was the first scientist to identify at least four new species of Iris: Swansonanea, Kirkwoodeae, Assadiana, and Yerudii. He was promoted to Associate Professorship and was the principal investigator on several landmark botanical scientific peer-reviewed papers.

Shaukat was a dedicated teacher and loved mentoring developing scientists, preferring to work with them in the lab over seminars. He used to dislike seminars and would say, “all that talking makes my tongue hurt, and my headache.” Renowned for his dedication to students, during the Civil War of Lebanon under university-wide evacuation, Dr. Chaudhary remained on campus until all remaining graduating students in the Department of Botany had the opportunity to defend their doctoral theses.

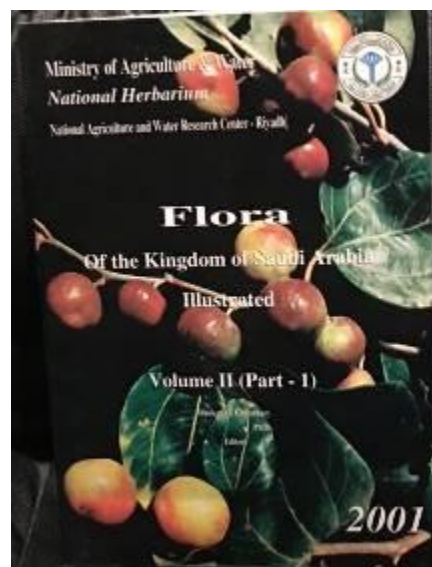
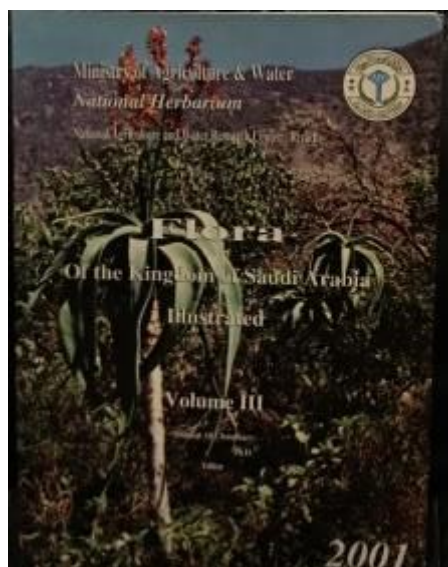
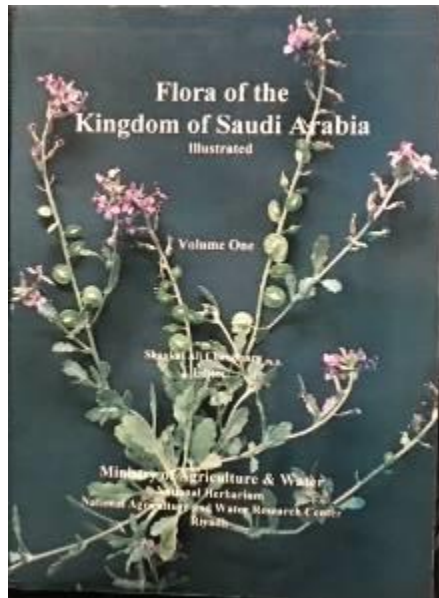
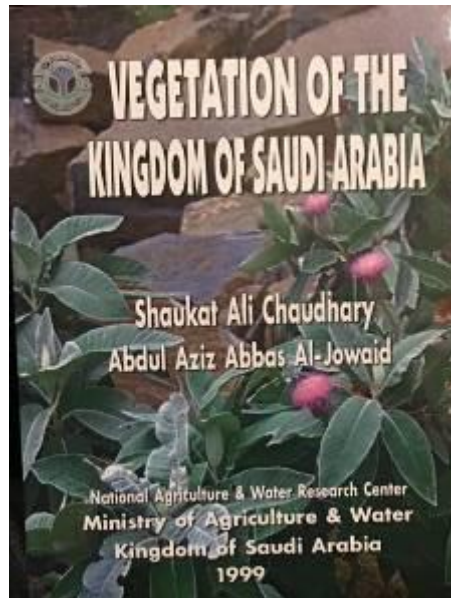


Family-circa 1976- with daughter Naela, son Samir, Shaukat, and wife Zahida.



Family in 2015 with son Samir, wife Zahida, granddaughter Sharmaine, and daughter-in-law Irum--Missing: Naveed and Ayesha.

During his career as a pre-eminent international scientist, scholar, teacher, mentor, and ecologist, Dr. Chaudhary authored over 200 peer-reviewed scientific articles, identified seven new species of plants, pioneered agricultural techniques for desert climates, and wrote three complete flora of vastly different botanical regions: The Flora of Lyallpur, Pakistan; the Flora of Lebanon; a five-volume Flora of Arabian Peninsula and 16 other books, culminating in his last publication, a compendium on The Natural History of Saudi Arabia.



Many of Dr. Chaudhary's book covers were adorned with photographs Dr. Chaudhary himself had taken on specimens collected during his field trips.

Scientifically, his contributions in scholarly research were on Iris species, Acacia species, arid-zone applications of agricultural techniques, ecologically sustainable herbicides, and establishing three National Herbaria: Pakistan, North Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Chaudhary's research areas globally included the North American Pacific Northwest, Australian Eastern Mountain Ranges, Northern Pakistan-India Subcontinental Plains, and the Middle Eastern Desert and Mountainous regions.

Dr. Chaudhary earned tenured faculty positions at The Agriculture University, Pakistan; American University of Beirut, Lebanon; and the University of Kuwait and was Visiting Professor at the University of Edinburgh and the Technical University of Munich.

After being named Emeritus Professor at A.U.B., Dr. Chaudhary was awarded an Honorary D.Sc. by the University of Edinburgh.

At retirement from the Food and Agriculture Organization, Dr. Chaudhary was awarded The Golden Shield Excellence Award for his outstanding contributions by the Agriculture Ministry of Saudi.

Dr. Chaudhary was respected for his mild temperament, keen intelligence, generous kindness, and steadfast integrity in his personal life.

Born in Sialkot, Pakistan, to Chaudhary Allah Rakha and Resham Bibi, who founded a family-run construction company that still thrives today. He grew up in a large bustling family with his elder sister and eight brothers, with parents who valued education and hard work.



*At a family event in Sydney Australia with five of his brothers
L to R: the late Rtd. Brig. General Dr. Ahmad Ali, Rtd. Pakistan AirForce Ofcr.
Muhammad Mushtaq, Dr. Ali Sarfraz, Dr. Shaukat Ali Chaudhary, the late
Prof. Muhammad Akram, the late Barrister Mohammad Ali Chaudhary. Dr.
Shaukat Ali Chaudhary is wearing the grey cardigan- third from right.*

Dr. Chaudhary first married in 1956 to Miss Nazeerah Begum. Tragically, she died at a young age in 1960 leaving Dr. Chaudhary and two young children Naveed and Naela who continued to live in Faisalabad. Then, in 1967 Dr. Chaudhary married a petite and intelligent psychologist named Zahida Sarwar whom he met through a mutual acquaintance from their shared hometown. Together they had two more children, raising a happy blended family, and together celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2017



Dinner function for the handsome couple, Riyadh Saudi Arabia, 1984



Dr. Chaudhary's 81st birthday in Sydney with wife of 53 years, Zahida.

Dr. Chaudhary spent his post-retirement life in Baulkham Hills, NSW, Australia where he lovingly tended his vegetable garden and bountiful fruit trees, which thrived in the perfect climate. His Mangoes, Pomegranates, Figs, Sweet Limes, Guavas, Kumquats, Lemons, Tangerines, and Sour Limes continue to produce prodigious quantities of fruit.



Pomegranates from Dr. Chaudhary's trees in February 2019.

He spent many sunny afternoons visiting with his numerous friends, children, brothers, nieces, nephews, and especially delighting in spending time with his 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Inspired by the scientific career of Dr. Chaudhary, one of his grandsons, Zain, is currently a 3rd year Ph.D. student in the applied sciences.



Eldest son Dr. Naveed Shaukat and middle daughter Dr. Ayesha Chaudhary



*Dr. and Mrs. Chaudhary with son Naveed and three grandchildren:
Noah, Sophie, and Sharmaine*

Dr. Chaudhary's greatest loves were his beloved wife Zahida, a "perfectly made" cup of tea, his strange-but-delicious recipe for porridge, ripe Pakistani mangoes, his daily early morning 3 km nature trail hikes, and relentlessly accurate scientific inquiry.



*Above: Pomegranate harvest during the first round of chemotherapy,
February 2019. Dr. Shaukat and Mrs. Zahida Chaudhary.*

Coordinator's note: I am profoundly grateful to Ayesha Chaudhary for taking the lead to make this scholarship a reality.

The scholarship awards at The Agriculture University, Faisalabad named the Professor Shaukat Ali Chaudhary Memorial Scholarship was established through the contributions from the Chaudhary Family, the Clapacs Family, and the Ullah Family. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to the donors for their generosity.

This is a merit scholarship awarded to the top-scoring graduate of the BSc in Botany program, which will support the continuation of studies into the Masters of Sciences in Botany.

Bashir Chaudhary