

A TRIBUTE BY RAJ KANWAR

In death of Gulab Ramchandani, India loses a distinguished educationist and Dehradun a venerable citizen

In the passing away of Gulab Ramchandani on Thursday, India has lost a distinguished educationist and Dehradun a venerable resident. As the fifth and one of the longest serving headmasters of the Doon School, Gulab is credited with completely revamping the school's educational, financial and administrative systems, thereby securing its status as one of the country's finest educational institutions.

He achieved this feat through his exemplary management skills.

In his twilight years, Gulab had become afflicted with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) that restricted his mobility, and he eventually capitulated while battling cardiac and pulmonary complications at the Max Hospital on the Baisakhi morning. His son Vivek was at his bedside when the end came. Come December 24, Gulab would have celebrated his 90th birthday.

The news of his death spread like a wild fire in the city as also in the Dosco fraternity. Fulsome tributes poured in. Kishore K. Lahiri, a former President of Doon School Old Boys' Society (DSOBS), described his demise as "a terrible loss to the entire Doon School community".

Jyotsna Brar, who had been the Principal of Welham Girls' School for well over a decade, says of his passing away, "Another icon has left our Valley and there is a terrible sense of the passing of an era. His life deserves to be celebrated. I greatly valued my association with Gulab and Ratna." Gulab was also at one time chairman of the Welham Boys' School.

Darshan Singh, another former president of DSOBS and currently Chairman of Welham Boys' School, says, "Ramchandani was responsible for introducing a greater degree of involvement in the Board's management of the Welham School." "Drawing on his experience in the corporate sector, Gulab Ramchandani gave the Doon School a strong administration with tight financial discipline, to the point of frugality," Phillip Burrett, then a young master remembers.

PROFUSE TRIBUTE BY JOHN MASON

John Mason, who had joined as the Doon School headmaster in 1996, speaks profusely of Ramchandani's many contributions. "As an old boy, Gulab understood the ethos of the school and built a vibrant culture on campus, in the nine years he was the headmaster. Ramchandani was a highly respected school administrator owing to his meticulous attention to detail, his scrupulous integrity and his human touch. Committed to social causes, particularly in education, Gulab worked with Mady Martyn in establishing the John Martyn Memorial School in Salangaon, in memory of the legendary former Headmaster of the Doon School."

Born in Hyderabad Sindh (now in Pakistan), the son of an army surgeon, Gulab joined The Doon School in 1937 and went on to Lucknow University, where he earned a Bachelor's degree (BSc Botany, Zoology, Chemistry) and played hockey for the University. His marriage with Ratna that spanned 59 happy and blissful years ended in 2011 when she died in an unfortunate road accident



Gulab & Ratna - Heyday smiles



Gulab Ramchandani

just four kilometers away from their Jhajra home. It was a love marriage and the courtship lasted six long years before they tied the knot.

Gulab was a true karamyogi, if there was one. He began his career in 1946 as a management trainee with Blue Star Pvt Ltd. As one of the earliest members of its management team, he was a key contributor to the remarkable growth and diversification of the Company over 33 years of his exemplary corporate service. He took a premature retirement in 1979 as its executive director in response to a strong appeal from the Board of Governors of The Doon School to help secure the future of his alma mater, as its first 'Old Boy' headmaster. The rest is history.

Not one to sit on his laurels, Gulab upon superannuation at 60 from the Doon School began his third innings as a consultant. As an educator on a crusade for child-friendliness and quality in schools, he established the country's first successful school planning and systems consultancy practice that led the establishment and commissioning of over twenty notable contemporary schools. Offering consultancy services on a wide range of institutional planning and management matters, Gulab was widely respected and frequently consulted by edupreneurs and school managers until he finally retired in 2010. Gulab loved the sylvan environs of the Doon Valley and the peace of the beautiful garden home he and Ratna created in Jhajra. A kind, compassionate and caring human being, he was loved universally by all who came within his ambit and made an exceptional and charming host for all his frequent visitors.