

IN QUEST OF KNOWLEDGE

Celebrating the remarkable life and legacy of Dr Vibha Dineshkumar Shah

Biographies are usually written about famous people who have achieved extraordinary things. Rarely, however, does someone turn the biographical lens toward a spouse.

Dineshkumar Devchand Shah does exactly that, offering a deeply moving tribute that celebrates the life, intellect, and spirit of his wife, **Vibha Dineshkumar Shah** (MPharm, FCCA, MBA), in a work that resonates with both the heart and the soul.

This tribute finds expression in **'In Quest of Knowledge: A Biography'**, launched on September 27, 2025, at the **Nairobi International Book Fair (NIBF) at the Sarit Expo Centre**, Westlands. The book was co-edited by Obingo Wesonga and features a preface by teacher-turned-writer Charles Okoth.

Married for 42 years until her passing in 2021, Dineshkumar and Vibha Shah shared a life marked by intellectual rigour, disci-



Panel discussion on book Daljit Solanki, Dinesh Shah, Dr Jennifer Nyambura Muchiri, Charles O Okoth

Pitman shorthand, she passed away in October 2021 after battling vasculitis.

More than a husband's tribute, **'In Quest of Knowledge'** is a hymn to family, constancy, and quiet heroism. A love letter to a departed wife and a chronicle of the Visa Oshwal community's resilience, it celebrates a life devoted to knowledge, travel, and purposeful living.

Union shaped by grace and grit

In an interview with The Books Café, a literary pro-



Master of Ceremonies, Dr Tom Odhiambo



Dinesh Shah with family and Guests at Launch Ceremony

pline, and quiet excellence. The biography traces Dr Shah's extraordinary pursuit of knowledge across pharmacy and accountancy.

Born in 1953, her academic journey began at Visa Oshwal schools, where she quickly distinguished herself, scoring the only Grade A in English in Standard Seven. She went on to excel at Pangani High School as a top student and debater, before completing her A-levels at Jamhuri High School, where she served as a prefect and received the President's Award.

Between 1972 and 1975, she graduated magna cum laude in pharmacy from what is now Cardiff University, launching a professional career at London's Hammersmith Hospital and later at Boots. Returning to Kenya in 1978, she was registered as a pharmacist and married Dineshkumar Shah that same year. The couple had three children, one of whom died in childhood.

Later, Dr Vibha Shah transitioned into accountancy, registering with ACCA-UK in 1982 and becoming a full ACCA-Kenya member and FCCA affiliate in 1999. Proficient in French, computing, and

gramme on the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) English Service hosted by Khainga O'Okwemba, businessman-turned-author Dineshkumar Shah reflected on his early life, education, and return to Kenya. "I was born in Nairobi in June 1950, on Milner Road, now Kolobot Road, in Ngara," he said, recalling how his family later moved to Lindi in southern Tanzania, where his father worked on a sisal estate. Health complications caused by exposure to sisal fibres, however, forced their return to Nairobi three years later.

Back in Kenya, Dineshbhai studied at Visa Oshwal Primary and Jamhuri High School. After excelling in his O-levels, he went to London for further studies. "I came back in 1976 for a holiday, but my father got a stroke, so I had to take over the Nairobi River Service Station," he said. Recalling a turning point, he added, "In 1978, I met Vibha. We met only three times, got on so well, and decided, 'let's get married.' We married in December 1978."

Recalling how he met his wife, Dineshbhai said the introduction came through a mutual family friend,

Kantaben Lalji, who was close to Vibha's mother. "She knew I had returned from the UK, having studied economics and statistics, and she arranged our first meeting," he said. That meeting took place at the Hilton Hotel, where they spoke about their aspirations and life journeys. A second, discreet dinner followed at the Serena Hotel, and their third meeting was at the Simba Restaurant at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. "That's where we said yes," he recalled, adding, "we walked out of the restaurant hand in hand."

Speaking about his children, Dineshbhai recalled that their first child, Shail, was born in 1984. "Everything was fine," he said. Their second child, Shrena, born in the early 1990s, was diagnosed with microcephaly. "The doctors here told us, 'the best thing is to go to London,'" he recalled. The family sought treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital, and later at a specialist centre in Bournemouth, travelling repeatedly between Kenya, the UK, and India. "Everywhere they told us there was no cure," he said.

with 100 percent."

In 1995, their third child, Preksha, was born. Describing her, Shah said, "She's lively, talkative, and very much like her mother." He noted her wide circle of friends across the world, adding with pride, "She has that same spirit, she carries her mother's warmth wherever she goes."

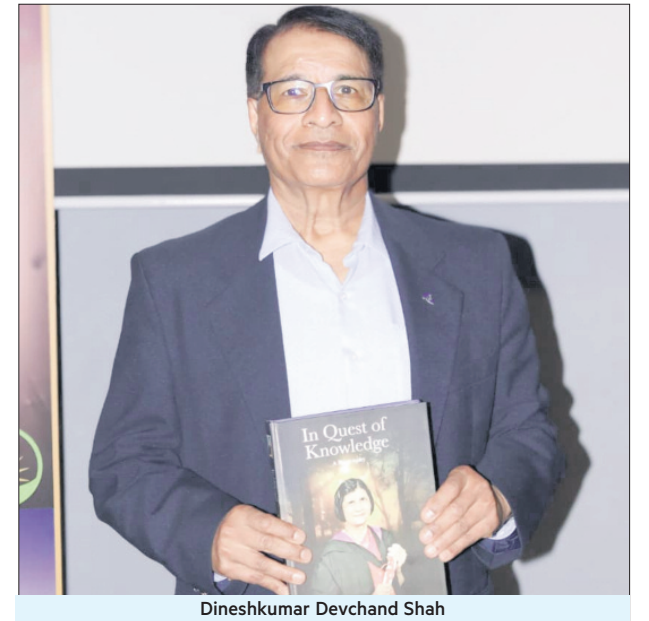
"Her life was remarkable and inspiring for young people"

Recalling what led him to write the biography, Dineshbhai said the idea first came from Vibha herself. "Around 2018 or 2019, she suddenly said, 'I can write my autobiography,'" he remembered. When he encouraged her to begin, she replied, "Let me first finish my doctorate, then I'll write it." Reflecting on the book, he added, "If she had written it herself, much more would

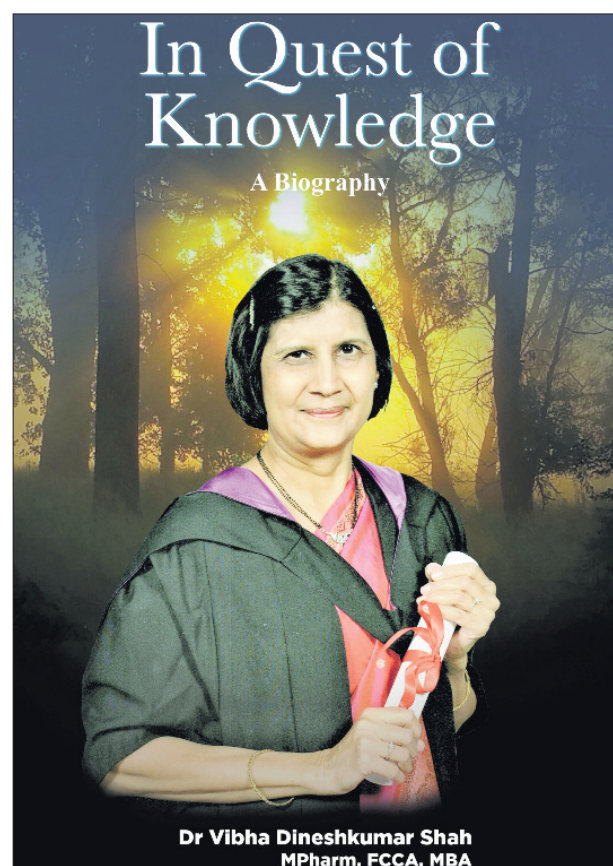
modest and always helped others—that's why so many people had stories to share about her."

Dinesh also spoke about Vibha's sudden illness in June 2021. "One evening she couldn't get up from the sofa," he recalled. After weeks of uncertainty, a specialist diagnosed vasculitis. "Either vasculitis or TB," the doctor said," Dinesh remembered. Though she briefly emerged from a coma and regained her speech and memory, the intensive treatment took its toll. "I collected about 150 pints of blood in six weeks," he said, expressing gratitude to doctors and donors. "The specialists later confirmed the treatment was right-but sometimes, even when you do everything right, fate decides."

Two years after her passing, the idea of writing the



Dineshkumar Devchand Shah



Dr Vibha Dineshkumar Shah
MPharm, FCCA, MBA

Shrena passed away in May 1994. "We did our best, everything we could, but the doctors had warned us her life would be very short." He remembered Vibha's unwavering care, adding, "Whatever she did, she did it

have come out." Much of the early material, he explained, came from conversations with her relatives, friends, and classmates. "She never boasted about her qualifications," he said. "She was very

book took shape. "Her life was remarkable and inspiring for young people," Dinesh said. "In August 2023, it came to me, Vibha wanted to write her autobiography, but she couldn't. So I decided to try." Though a businessman all his life, Dinesh said his experience in problem-solving and decades of community service, within the Visa Oshwal community, the Hindu Council of Kenya, and other organisations, gave him the confidence to begin. With the support of his children and both families, the project moved forward.

Reflecting on the lessons readers can draw from the biography, Dinesh said Vibha's life was defined by humility and commitment. "Whatever you do, do it 100 percent, with your heart," he said. "She never boasted about her qualifications, she always spoke to people at their level." He added that her humility was also the foundation of their 42-year marriage. "That was the secret," he said. "It was a truly excellent marriage."

A grand launch of the book in the UK is being planned by Mr Dinesh Shah in June 2026.