

*Interviewed by Angela Mutiso, cananews@gmail.com*

# SERVICE TO OTHERS, SERVICE TO GOD

**C**PA Swaly Jitendra Trikamdas has kept a full diary in his mind that just about dates back to the date of his birth in India in 1945. His father's name Trikamdas means servant of God and Jitendra is a person with controlled desires; he has tried as best he can to live by these virtues. Swaly's life history is fascinating. Actually, as he narrates it, you cannot help but admire his sharp power of observation, his love for his work his rich experience, and deep religious devotion.

An early qualification as a chartered accountant in Bombay India in 1974 and arrival in Kenya soon afterwards, made him one of the most sought after accountants in Kenya at the time. Big clients hunted for him and most have retained his services to date. They have in addition introduced him to several other notable organizations. He is the proprietor of Swaly and Company, a firm he set up in 1975 and has diligently ran for 41 years. His clientele is diverse; they are from France, Turkey, Germany, Asia, and Britain among others. "I work with devotion; not just for money" explains Swaly humbly. His competence and confidence are priceless and are endearing factors in his daily interactions.

His forefathers were marine engineers and used to manufacture dhows. This was 100 years ago; the Swaly family was responsible for Royal Finance control. The family got this (royal) title because his grandfather used to manage the Royal

Finance in Zanzibar; to date this family still has some high monuments in Zanzibar. In 1954 OAU promulgated Jungbar and Tanganyika and they made a treaty. Kenya was a British colony and Tanzania was a German region.

Swaly has two sons; Jeegar is an engineer in England while Devanshu a CPA, works for an accounting firm in America. He recalls happily the time Devanshu obtained the highest marks in an accountancy paper in the world while he was in Kenya; and by so doing, raised Kenya's profile. His name was published in several American magazines. In 2007, Swaly survived a major set back, and looks back with appreciation at the assistance he got from his family and friends during a difficult spell. He became sick due to

extreme distress he suffered as a result of some family issues. During this period, he was in bad shape and was bed ridden for three and a half years. He suffered a neuron ailment and had to be treated in America, India and England. By God's grace he recovered but still dreads thinking of what he went through then. "It is something I prefer to forget, but cannot" he exclaims despondently. He recovered in 2010, and went about clearing the mess that had inevitably been created during his absence. He concedes that without his family's unceasing encouragement and nurturing, his recuperation would have been difficult if not impossible. His gratitude to them is endless. He put these unfortunate events behind him and in 2012 (after 38 years) joined college to do an MBA which he finished at Sunderland University in the UK. He intends to do his doctorate in Tax; "only By the Grace of God" he adds solicitously.

Swaly's life continues to be fast paced; guests consistently pop in and out of his office through out the day. He would like to

*Swaly Jitendra Trikamdas*

***You need to be devoted, hardworking, reliable and honest. Be systematic, methodical and innovative. You must have a sense of belonging.***

slow down and is putting measures in place to continue his practice even while he is not in the office full time. After completing his B.com in Ranchi University in Bihar (India), in 1970, he went to Bombay and studied institute of chartered accountants in India. He followed his uncle in Kenya in 1974 then went back to India for one and a half years to marry his beloved wife in 1976, came back in 1978 and became a CPA in 1979. He registered at the accountants board (RAB). Between 1981 and 1982, he was selected as one of the lecturers to teach accountancy and tax law at Nairobi University. His specialty is Audit and Tax. Swaly's Uncle S.P Negandhi also an accountant, came to Kenya in 1956 and worked for Standard Chartered Bank for 12 years. He had another uncle who came to Kenya in 1937. Below are excerpts from our interview:

**Why do you want to do your PHD now?**

In 2014, I finished my MBA; now I want to do my PHD because I know that the pursuit of knowledge is the noblest activity as per our scriptures. There is no age limit when you are in pursuit of knowledge. I have lived my life and my philosophy is; to share my knowledge, and give back to society. I came empty handed and I want to go empty handed, but in the process I intend to return to the world what it has given me.

**What do you think of accounting in Kenya today?**

It is one of the most wonderful because of the IFRSs. ICPAK has become an international and competitive institute. Kenya is ranked number two after South Africa. And as a professional accountancy education country, Kenya has maintained its prominence in East and Southern Africa. Kenya is doing enough in the accountancy field, but with time, whatever changes are coming, we should adopt them. Come to think of it, the East African community was of equal ranking, but over the years,

Kenya has emerged as a top financial, educational and manufacturing hub. It has come out as a very bright country in the East African Community. I feel Kenya has enjoyed a very favorable liking by Western countries; a pet child of Britain, Europe and North America.

**What advice for nascent accountants?**

My advice to young accountants is like any other profession; you need to be devoted, hardworking, reliable and honest. Be systematic, methodical and innovative. You must have a sense of belonging. Look at it this way, if I am your doctor, I should keep you free from disease. Every professional should have a welfare mind and keep his patient free from disease.

Swaly loves literature. He reads Gita, the Bible, and lots of humorous publications. He also enjoys biographies of great successful people. "My parents inculcated in me a lot of culture. My father was a social worker; that inspired me. As a legacy, I believe the accounting profession should always prosper and be useful to the economic development of a country.

What are the highlights of your life? I wanted to simplify accounting for our younger generation to develop their interest in accounting and learn it with ease. It happened that during this time, I got a lot of students on attachment from various universities in Kenya and I trained them. Some of them today have very high profile positions in Kenya. From 1978 when I became a CPA, I ensured that I served actively for the next 10 years in a number of sub committees of ICPAK. I was a member of the editorial committee for the Accountant Journal at some point; I was also in the education committee and the professional committee at different times.

As a royal family, we were taught that if by the Grace of God you gain a skill, use it for the benefit of mankind; even today I am an honorary auditor for a number of churches, temples and Gurudwaras. I have been a

social worker from my childhood. I love to teach and I love to share my experiences. I also love to travel; I have visited many countries in the world with my wife and those have been some of my best moments and a great reward for my work.

**Milestones**

- 1945- FCPA Swaly Jitendra Trikamdas is born; attends Gujarat Kutch Primary School in India
- 1970 -graduates with B.Com Honours
- 1974-completes Chartered Accountants course in Bombay, India
- 1976- Marries Ragini
- 1978-1998 – He served M/s G.M. Kariuki and Partners; a legendary accountancy firm of independent era where he served some of the eminent personalities like Dr. Munyu Waiyaki Kenya's first foreign minister, Mr. Jackson Kamau Chege Kenya's 1st education secretary, Mr. Jackson Angaine Kenya's first land minister and many patriot dignities of independent Kenya.
- 1979- Became CPA
- 1981-1982-Lectured Accounting, Audit and Taxation at Nairobi University
- 1984- Appointed first auditor of Mugoya construction
- 1987 – became CPS
- 1987 to date Private Practice
- 1996 – He had represented Kenya at the International Religious Conference in Durban S.A and had prestigious privilege to lunch with His Excellency Nelson Mandela who inaugurated the event.
- 2012 – became member of Kenya Management Institute (KIM) also became member of institute of Directors Kenya (IOD)
- 2014 – He was honored as one of the oldest practicing Indian Chartered accountants since early seventies by the president of the Indian Institute of Chartered accountants on his visit to Kenya.
- Hopes to do his doctorate in Tax