Dr. Faqir Chand Kohli, a pioneer and a visionary (1924-2020)

-   Dr. Satyanarayana B (Chair, IEEE Bombay Section)

An academically bright, F.C. Kohli topped his Matriculation from the NWFP and graduated from Government College, Lahore in undivided British India before India's independence in flying colours with a BA and a BSc (hons) in Physics. He went on to do a BS in Electrical Engineering from Queens University, Kingston, Canada and Masters in System Engineering from MIT, Cambridge.

He started his professional career in India with the Tata Electric Companies, where he worked very hard and learnt everything about the entire generation, transmission and distribution systems. While the Tata Electric was already a tech savvy in power transmission even before Kohli entered it, he pioneered use of mainframe computers for load dispatch and network management in the company. Through a technical paper, he also recommended formation of a national power grid, which is what we see today as the Power Grid Corporation of India.

Following up of his pioneering adoption of digital computers in power engineering sector, the outstanding achievement of Kohli has been the building of TCS and taking it to the unimaginable heights and to the giant success that it is today. He ingeniously applied his knowledge of System Engineering gained at MIT in solving the problem of scaling up business at TCS, which has come out to be known later as

software engineering. Thanks to his disruptive business innovations, in the world of global business today, India is known for its dominance in IT services.

Another dimension of Kohli in has been improving the standards of engineering education. He advocated that a handful of IITs are insufficient and many existing engineering colleges in India have the potential to reach the IIT standards, if properly run. He engaged himself as the active chairman of the board to raise the standard of College of Engineering, Pune.

Kohli has extensively worked for the development of a vibrant community of engineers to solve both technical and societal problems. He worked tirelessly to expand the IEEE, Computer Society of India (CSI) and NASSCOM activities in India. IEEE India Section was formed at Bombay in 1963 with him as its first Chairperson. Later, Bombay Section was formed in 1976, again Kohli as its first Chairperson. He was the first Director of Region 10 from India. IEEE honoured him with its prestigious Founders Medal in 2012, the first Indian to be thus honoured. He was also honoured with Padma Bhushan third highest civilian award in India for his contributions to the Indian software industry. F.C. Kohli was an IEEE member for 69 years, he first become an IEEE member in 1951. In the year 1976, he was elevated as an IEEE Fellow and in 1990 he became IEEE Life member.

F.C. Kohli is a true legend and the father of IT revolution is no more, but his legacy will be alive forever and the IT industry will continue to flourish and affect day-to-day life of everyone on the planet.