



# Smithsonian

*National Air and Space Museum*

## Kalpana Chawla Collection

Patti Williams

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National Air and Space Museum Archives  
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## Collection Overview

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|--------------------|---|
| <b>Repository:</b> | National Air and Space Museum Archives  |
| <b>Title:</b>      | Kalpana Chawla Collection   |
| <b>Date:</b>       | 1980s -2000s  |
| <b>Identifier:</b> | NASM.2020.0004  |
| <b>Creator:</b>    | Chawla, Kalpana, 1961-2003  |
| <b>Extent:</b>     | 16.75 Cubic feet (12 flat boxes, 6 record center boxes, 6 document boxes, one map folder, and 25 VHS tapes.)  |
| <b>Language:</b>   | English .   |
| <b>Summary:</b>    | This collection consists of 16 cubic feet of archival material relating to the astronaut career of Kalpana Chawla, 1980s-2000s.<br>This collection is in English. |

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Sunita Chaudhry, Gift, 2020, NASM.2020.0004

### Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Patti Williams, 2021.

### Preferred Citation

Kalpana Chawla Collection, NASM.2020.0004, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

No restrictions on access

### Conditions Governing Use

Material is subject to Smithsonian Terms of Use. Should you wish to use NASM material in any medium, please submit an Application for Permission to Reproduce NASM Material, available at [Permissions Requests](#) .

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## Biographical / Historical

Kalpana Chawla was the first woman of Indian origin to become a NASA astronaut and fly on space missions. Born and educated in India (Karnal, Punjab), she came to the United States for graduate education in aerospace engineering at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) and the University of Colorado. After earning a Ph.D. in 1988, she began work at NASA's Ames Research Center in computational fluid dynamics. Selected into the astronaut corps in 1994, she first flew as a mission specialist and robotic arm operator for the STS-87 microgravity research mission on Columbia in 1997. Her second flight on Columbia, the STS-107

research mission in 2003, ended tragically when the damaged orbiter disintegrated during its return through the atmosphere and the entire crew perished. Even before her untimely death, Chawla was a national hero in India, having risen from humble beginnings to attain the remarkable achievement of spaceflight. In India, schools and scholarships are named in her honor and her birthday is widely celebrated, and she is also memorialized in the United States. Her ashes were scattered in Zion National Park, Utah.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection consists of 16 cubic feet of material relating to the astronaut career of Kalpana Chawla, 1980s-2000s. The collection includes the following types of archival material: photographs, correspondence, news articles and related documentation. The correspondence is between Kalpana Chawla and her immediate family, as well as condolence letters and e-mails received by the family after her tragic death.

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## Arrangement

Arranged by type and shipment.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

### Subjects:

- Space Shuttle Orbiter
- Space Shuttle Remote Manipulator Arm
- Space Shuttles, Columbia (OV-102)
- Space flight

### Types of Materials:

- Correspondence -- 20th century
- Photographs -- 20th century

### Names:

- United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration