

S. Raghavan (1934–2014)

As one grows old, one has unfortunately to bear the loss of friends of long standing. The most recent bereavement I have had to suffer is the passing away of my good friend S. Raghavan.

Raghavan was born in Tillaisthanam in Tanjavur, the hallowed place where one of the disciples of Saint Thyagaraja flourished, the style that evolved being called the Thillaisthanam school (gharana). Naturally, he became a lover of classical music. He was pious and worshipped Hanuman particularly.

Raghavan's father, Srinivasachariar, was a lawyer whom he greatly admired. He did his undergraduate studies at St Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli where he was a class fellow of S. S. Rangachari. A well-known geometer, Suryanarayana Iyer was one of the professors there and he seems to have encouraged them to undertake a deeper study of mathematics, and to have advised the better students not to be content with just getting a degree. Another class fellow of his, one R. V. Raghavan, who was working as a clerk in Southern Railways, told me that they were both very happy to have been admitted to Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai and enthused me to try and get there as well.

When I joined TIFR in 1957 as a graduate student, Raghavan was already working on algebraic and analytic number theory under the supervision of K. G. Ramanathan, who had joined the Institute as a professor a couple of years earlier. Raghavan was one of the students doing research in number theory at TIFR at that time, the others being Rangachari, who has settled down in the United States on retirement, and V. C. Nanda who later moved to Panjab University, Chandigarh.

I had occasion to learn (alas, only a little) about algebraic numbers and in particular class numbers of number fields from Raghavan. I believe that Raghavan's was the first paper from TIFR to appear

in *Annals of Mathematics*. He had by then become an expert on the work of C. L. Siegel, one of the great mathematicians in the first half of the 20th century. He was a great admirer of Siegel and even tried to follow his style of lecturing. One of Siegel's interests centred around the representation of integers by integral



quadratic forms. Raghavan generalized this in a deep way and I remember that Andre Weil, who was one of the permanent members at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS), Princeton (and also an editor of the *Annals of Mathematics*), was so impressed that he invited Raghavan to visit IAS soon thereafter. All this enthused many of the junior students, including myself, giving us the impetus to try and perform at the international level rather than tweak a little here and a little there, in order to get a doctorate.

Raghavan and I had many parallels. We received the Bhatnagar Award at the same time – for different years though! He was a Fellow of INSA as well as IASc. Over the years, both of us served as Editor of the *Proceedings of Mathematical Sciences* of IASc; Dean, School of Mathematics at TIFR and Member of the Council of INSA. May I also add that our spouses are both named Anuradha!

Raghavan served as Secretary and Council Member of the Indian Mathematical Society during 1970–75, and was also a member of the Editorial Board of its journal for many years. He was interested in teaching besides research, and taught for a few years at the Centre for Mathematics, Bombay University. This involved commuting from TIFR for over an hour and he used to lecture with equal energy and zeal at the end of it. After retirement, he was with the Chennai Mathematical Institute (then called SPIC Mathematical Institute) for a short time before settling down for a retired life. Even afterwards, he was interested in certain aspects of Srinivasa Ramanujan's work.

In the mid-seventies, the School of Mathematics at TIFR started a division of Applied Mathematics, initially located at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. The idea was to engage in those aspects of mathematics which have application potential. Accordingly, it was called TIFR Centre for Applicable Mathematics. Raghavan moved to Bengaluru after the initiator, K. G. Ramanathan returned to Mumbai in a few years. He was conscientious at work, be it academic or administrative, and demanded the same degree of perfection from others.

When I went to bid Raghavan goodbye as he was about to leave Mumbai, he advised me, 'you have a tendency to quip. It may unwittingly hurt people sometimes. Be careful!' I do not know if I improved in this regard, but I recognized the truth of this remark and was touched by the gentle, well-meant concern.

Raghavan is survived by his wife, son, daughter-in-law and two grandsons.

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