

Obituary

HRJ deeply regrets to inform its readers of the sad news of the passing away of Mrs. K. Saraswati Ramachandra on 18th November, 2015 in their residence 'Selberg House' in Bangalore.

Born on 20th December, 1935 in the small town of Nagamangala located about 120 Kilometers to the west of Bangalore, she studied only up to 7th standard, or Lower Secondary as it was called back then. She married Ramachandra in Nagamangala in the year 1958, the year in which he joined TIFR for his PhD. Ramachandra once recalled that they travelled in South India after the wedding, visiting many famous temple towns in Tamil Nadu, especially places closely connected with the life of Srinivasa Ramanujan – the mathematician he adored all his life. Since he was still a PhD student in TIFR Mumbai at the time of his marriage and was living in the hostel, she lived with Ramachandra's mother in Bangalore as was the normal practice those days. She moved to Mumbai (then Bombay) five years later, around the time Ramachandra finished his PhD and stabilized in his professional life.

Ramachandra used to say often that she was a great support to him all his life, and that it was a source of deep comfort especially since the life of a mathematician was very demanding emotionally. Not quite sure that Ramachandra would spend much time with family whenever he travelled, as Ramachandra was always engrossed in his mathematics, she accompanied him only once when he visited England on a six month sabbatical.

One incident that Ramachandra always remembered with great pride was that when Paul Erdős visited him in TIFR, he stayed for three days in their house and thoroughly enjoyed the many tasty meals cooked and served by his wife.

When the Hardy-Ramanujan Journal was revived two years after Ramachandra's passing away in January 2011, I happened to mention it to Mrs. Ramachandra when I spoke to her over phone. She was deeply moved and happy, and recalled that HRJ was like one of Ramachandra's prime obsessions and how he would be keen and restless weeks before each of its annual issue was ready. She was gratified to learn that his HRJ legacy is continuing.

The HRJ Editorial Board feels that it is appropriate and fitting that we mourn the sad demise of Mrs. Ramachandra in this issue, and thereby record her behind-the-scene and unsung services on this occasion. We offer our deepest condolences.

C. S. Aravinda.

Below is a note from Kishor Bhat, one of Ramachandra's PhD students, recording his memories of Late Mrs. Ramachandra:

"K. Saraswati, known by many of us as Mrs. Ramachandra, passed away last month. She is survived by her daughter Valli.

I met her first in 2008. The trait that made Professor Ramachandra a great mathematician was his strength of will and focus, and it was surprising to see his wife having that same trait. She was no-nonsense and stood as the rock of the family. Even in the harshest of storms she would lead the family through.

Professor Ramachandra spoke of his wife often to me. He told me once about how they met as children and how they kept some of that child-like play into their late years.

When his health was failing, I saw her qualities as a leader, taking command of a deeply difficult situation. I grew in my respect for her then. I visited the home once in a while afterwards to see how she was doing. She was always friendly when I came.

I wish her daughter and the rest of her family well. She will be missed. The impression of her life on mine will be with me always."