

25 papers of his in addition to a joint paper. The first paper *On the application of the screw to the floats of paddlewheels* was published in the *Philosophical Magazine* in 1865 and this constitutes his sole contribution to applied mechanics. His most famous contribution is to be found in Vol. 23 of the *Proceedings* of the Royal Society. It gives the substance of his Bakerian lecture on *The forms of equipotential curves and surfaces and lines of electric force*. He was one of the foundation members of the Physical Society of London.

The chief dates in his scientific career are the following:—

- 1872 Elected Fellow of the Royal Society.
- 1875 Delivered the Bakerian lecture.
- 1879 President of the Physical Society.
- 1880 President of the A Section of the British Association.
- 1883 Delivered Cantor lectures on electric lighting.
- 1884 President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers.

S. R. RANGANATHAN.

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## Obituary.

### Mr. V. Ramaswami Aiyar, M.A. (1871-1936).

IT is with very deep regret that we learnt that the founder of the Indian Mathematical Society (started as the Indian Mathematical Club in 1906), Mr. V. Ramaswami Aiyar, M.A., retired Deputy Collector, suddenly passed away at Chittoor on the 22nd ultimo.

Mr. V. Ramaswami Aiyar was born in 1871 in Coimbatore district. After a brilliant educational career he served for a short time in the Central College, Bangalore and the Maharajah's College, Mysore, and (rather unfortunately for the development of mathematical research in India) he then entered the Madras Civil Service. His interest in mathematics continued unabated till his death all through his career as a revenue and judicial officer. It is even rumoured that this contributed adversely to his advancement in service. He was an outstanding example of a very enthusiastic lover of mathematical research. One of his great aims was to promote the cause of mathematical research in India. It can easily be said that he has achieved it remarkably well, considering the fact that India entered the field of mathematical research after a lapse of nearly ten centuries.

One memorable episode of his life was the

discovery of Ramanujan, one of the greatest geniuses of mathematics that the world has ever produced.

The place of Mr. V. Ramaswami Aiyar in the development of mathematical research in India cannot be determined solely by the work that he produced. If he were born in an advanced western country with ample opportunities for learning under great workers with every sort of facility, he would no doubt have contributed substantial works. At least if he were a professor of mathematics in any of our universities, his great imagination, which stands forth prominently in his contributions to the so-called "Modern Geometry of the Triangle", would perhaps have been used in modern projectile geometry producing valuable results. His were days when very few people in India realised that there was mathematical research beyond the problems in Journals such as the *Educational Times*.

Perhaps his was the only example of a research worker and enthusiast in mathematics in India outside the ranks of our universities, whose interests continued unabated all through his life. We offer our sincere condolences to his bereaved family.

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