Ramanujan: Essays and Surveys (History of Mathematics, V. 22)

By Bruce C. Berndt

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This book contains essays on Ramanujan and his work , as well as important survey articles in areas influenced by Ramanujan's mathematics. Most of the articles in the book are nontechnical, but even those that are more technical contain substantial sections that will engage the general reader.
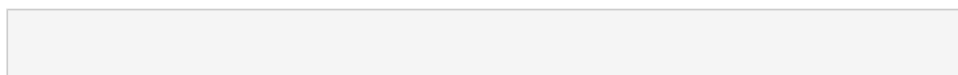
The book opens with the only four existing photographs of Ramanujan, presenting historical accounts and information about other people in the photos. This section includes an account of a cryptic family history written by his younger brother, S. Lakshmi Narasimhan. Following are articles on Ramanujan's illness by R. A. Rankin, the British physician D. A. B. Young, and Nobel laureate S. Chandrasekhar. They present a study of his symptoms, a convincing diagnosis of the cause of his death, and a thorough exposition of Ramanujan's life as a patient in English sanitariums and nursing homes.

Following this are biographies of S. Janaki (Mrs. Ramanujan) and S. Narayana Iyer, Chief Accountant of the Madras Port Trust Office, who first communicated Ramanujan's work to the Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society. The last half of the book begins with a section on "Ramanujan's Manuscripts and Notebooks". Included is an important article by G. E. Andrews on Ramanujan's lost notebook.

The final two sections feature both nontechnical articles, such as Jonathan and Peter Borwein's "Ramanujan and pi", and more technical articles by Freeman Dyson, Atle Selberg, Richard Askey, and G. N. Watson.

This volume complements the book Ramanujan: Letters and Commentary, Volume 9, in the AMS series, History of Mathematics. For more on Ramanujan, see these AMS publications, Ramanujan: Twelve Lectures on Subjects Suggested by His Life and Work, Volume 136.H, and Collected Papers of Srinivasa Ramanujan, Volume 159.H, in the AMS Chelsea Publishing series.

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Editorial Review

Review
A valuable source of initiation into Ramanujan's mathematics for some time to come. --B. Sury, Resonance

The book under review assembles a fine collection of essays by several distinguished authors on a variety of topics that range over Ramanujan's remarkable life and contributions ... This book is a worthy sequel to Ramanujan: Letters and Commentary. It also nicely complements Hardy's classic Ramanujan: Twelve Lectures on Subjects Suggested by His Life and Work and Ramanujan's Collected Papers ... Selberg's ... article provides many insights and is a magnificent tribute to Ramanujan ... This book, with its delightful collection of essays and surveys relating to Ramanujan's life and mathematics, is accessible to, and an inspiration for, laymen, students, and professional mathematicians alike. --MAA Monthly

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