

Reminiscences

Professor K G Ramanathan was known to many of his colleagues, friends and students as KGR. KGR was associated in Princeton with great mathematicians like Carl Ludwig Siegel and Emil Artin. When he joined TIFR he communicated enthusiastically his scholarship in mathematics to the research students. The young mathematicians at TIFR, thus acquired a taste for some deep areas of mathematics which were until then not cultivated in India; this had impact on the future course of research for many of them.

When C S Seshadri and I were research students at TIFR, during the first year of our stay KGR was staying in the hostel and we interacted with him closely. During the long walks in the evenings he used to talk to us extensively about mathematics and mathematicians. I still recall vividly his beautiful summary of Siegel's Princeton lectures "Analytic functions of several complex variables". This course of lectures treated among other topics Cousin's problems, Abelian functions, period relations, discrete subgroups of Lie groups, bounded symmetric domains, work of E and H Cartan, Siegel modular group and modular functions. Some of the other topics he talked about were: Class Field Theory, Kronecker's "liebster Jugendtraum", uniformisation of Riemann surfaces and the problem of resolutions of singularities in algebraic geometry.

We also came to know through him about the paper "Generalisation des fonctions abeliennes" by Andre Weil, which had been pointed out to him by Siegel. This paper played a crucial role in our later research. He also used to relate, with his keen sense of humour, many interesting anecdotes about mathematicians.

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