

## Preface

As part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Raman Research Institute, a 'Discussion Meeting on Liquid Crystals and Other Soft Materials' was organized during 28 to 31 December 1998. Seventeen invited speakers delivered one hour long talks on their chosen topics, which included various aspects of liquid crystals, amphiphilic systems, polymers, water and biological systems. A public lecture on 'Biology and Information Theory' was delivered by Prof. A J Libchaber and the meeting concluded with a general discussion. About 100 participants attended the meeting. Seventy of them were senior Ph.D. students and post docs selected from all over the country, and an advanced school was conducted for their benefit during 21 to 25 December in which the technical background to the topics which would be discussed during the succeeding week was covered. These proceedings contain all the invited papers presented in the discussion meeting.

Co-operation from a large number of people was essential in holding both the advanced school and the discussion meeting. Our thanks are due to Prof. N Kumar, the director of Raman Research Institute for his enthusiastic support. Many thanks are due to all my colleagues, in particular to G S Ranganath, B K Sadashiva, K A Suresh, T N Ruckmongathan, V A Raghunathan and Yashodhan Hatwalne for their contributions to various aspects of the organization of the two meetings. The students, technical and secretarial staff of the liquid crystal laboratory put in many extra hours of work, and the administrative staff of Raman Research Institute lightened our effort significantly.

Our most grateful thanks of course go to all the speakers in both the meetings. The lectures in the advanced school were given by G S Ranganath, Rajendra Bhandari, B K Sadashiva, K A Suresh, T N Ruckmongathan, V A Raghunathan, Yashodhan Hatwalne, V Lakshminarayanan, Madan Rao and myself from Raman Research Institute, M Muthukumar of the University of Massachusetts, Yashwant Singh of the Banaras Hindu University, Ajay Sood of the Indian Institute of Science and Srikanth Sastry of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre.

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