Preface

To commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the discovery of the columnar phase which was made at the Raman Research Institute, an International Conference on Liquid Crystals and Other Soft Materials was organized during 18–20 December 2002. A total of twenty-nine invited presentations were made which included topics on liquid crystals and a few other areas of soft condensed matter as well. Two plenary talks, one by Prof. S T Lagerwall of Sweden on ‘Antiferroelectric liquid crystals and their optical properties’ and the other by Prof. C Tschierske of Germany on ‘Research on microsegregation in liquid crystal systems: From antiferroelectricity to ferroelectricity in smectic mesophases formed by bent-core molecules’ were given. Over a hundred participants comprising Ph.D. students and post-doctoral fellows selected from different institutions across the country attended the conference and took part in the deliberations.

We are extremely grateful to all speakers, particularly those from overseas, who accepted our invitation. I thank my colleagues K A Suresh, T N Ruckmongathan, V Lakshminarayanan, V A Raghunathan, R Pratibha, Yashodhan Hatwalne and Madan Rao who also presented their work.

To organize such a conference, support and co-operation from a number of people are required. I take this opportunity to thank Prof. N Kumar, the Director of Raman Research Institute for his spontaneous support. The students, technical and secretarial staff of the Liquid Crystal Laboratory have put in a lot of extra effort, as also the administrative staff of the Institute in the smooth conduct of the conference.

It is a pleasure to thank all my colleagues in the Liquid Crystal Laboratory, N V Madhusudana, G S Ranganath, K A Suresh, T N Ruckmangathan, V Lakshminarayanan, V A Raghunathan, R Pratibha, Yashodhan Hatwalne and D Vijayaraghavan for their help in various ways in the organization of this conference.

Finally, I am grateful to N V Madhusudana and G S Ranganath for evaluating some of the manuscripts and suggesting suitable modifications. Last, but not the least, our sincere thanks to the editorial board and the office staff of Pramana for making this publication possible.

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