

RADHA G. LAHA

(INDIAN-AMERICAN, 1930 - 1999)

EARLY LIFE

Born as the eldest child of a large family with 8 siblings in Calcutta, India, he was dedicated to his studies since childhood. His father, a school teacher of mathematics, inspired him to fall in love with the subject.

Since then, he envisioned himself to be among the best mathematicians in the world, often scribbling their names and adding his name after them in the list.



EDUCATION

An alumni of Presidency College and Calcutta University, India, he received his Bachelor's (1949) and Master's (1951) Degrees in Statistics, standing first in rank and earning Gold and Silver medals.

His Doctoral Degree was in Analytical Probability Theory from Calcutta University (1957), under the supervision of the renowned mathematician and statistician, Prof. C.R. Rao.

CONTRIBUTIONS

He worked on Pure and Applied Statistics at Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, between 1952 and 1958.

In 1958 he moved to the USA as a Research Associate and faculty member at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Thereafter, he joined Bowling Green State University in 1972 and worked there till his retirement in 1996. There he introduced a new Ph.D. Program with his colleagues to foster more research in mathematics and statistics.

Coming from a developing country, he eventually elevated himself as a mathematician of international repute, overcoming socio-economic hardships.

His contributions have enriched research work in many areas of mathematics and statistics, both pure and applied, Functional and Harmonic Analysis, Infinite Dimensional Representation Theory. He proved several generalizations of the classical characterization of Normal Sample Distribution by the independence of Sample Mean and Sample Variance.

His fluency in Bengali, English, French and Russian languages helped him forge a strong bond with his students while teaching, and also while translating mathematical papers throughout his research.

He was the author of several classical texts on Probability Theory and Statistics and had numerous publications in academic journals.

He was an honoured fellow of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS) and an elected member of the International Statistical Institute.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

He grew up during troubled times ravaged by the Japanese bombing of Calcutta (1942-44) in World War II, the Famine of Bengal (1943) and India's Independence movement (1947).

Being the eldest child, he had to take care of his younger siblings, support his parents, and then find time for his studies.

Without electricity and frequent blackouts in the city, he had to study under street lights; nothing could act as a deterrent to dampen his passion for mathematics.

FUN FACTS

He was a connoisseur of western classical music and paintings.

To honour his gift and commitment to mathematical research, the American Mathematical Society (AMS) established the Radha G. Laha Gardens in 2001 outside the AMS headquarters in Providence, RI, USA.

The IMS created the Laha Travel Award to support students and researchers.