

F O R E W O R D

Symposium 5: “Mathematics and Society”, was held at the anniversary meeting of the Indian National Academy of Science taking place at the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa during December 27-29.

The language of mathematics in communicating basic ideas of science is ubiquitous. Unfortunately, like any other foreign language, we don't speak it very well. E. Wigner, in his article, “The unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in natural sciences”, in *Communications in Pure and Applied Mathematics*, Vol. 13, No. I (February 1960), says: “The miracle of the appropriateness of the language of mathematics for the formulation of the laws of physics is a wonderful gift which we neither understand nor deserve. We should be grateful for it and hope that it will remain valid in future research and that it will

extend, for better or for worse, to our pleasure, even though perhaps also to our bafflement, to wide branches of learning.”

His vision has proved prophetic. The symposium on “Mathematics and Society” was an attempt to celebrate this success. Professors M. S. Raghunathan and R. Parimala talked about the recent history of mathematics in India and women mathematicians of India. The following three lectures by Professors A. Habib, R. Balasubramanian, and R. Karandikar discussed some of the essential tools in understanding finance, encryption in communicating sensitive information and the outcome from the voting machines.

The articles in this Section are based on four out of five of these lectures.

Gadadhar Misra

Convener

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