FOREWORD

This is an eminently readable, unique book. There are many books about Ramanujan: numerous biographies, studies of his mathematics and its influence, even a psychoanalytic study. This, however, is the first to provide what might be termed a perspective overview.

This book is formed from essays written by Krishna Alladi over more than two decades. Most of the essays originally appeared in *The Hindu,* one of India's leading newspapers. each was written with the intent of providing a new way of thinking about Ramanujan.

Several of the articles are book reviews. Each of the books in question illuminates one aspect of Ramanujan, from his personal biography to his *Lost Notebook.* Included among the reviews is one devoted to the stage play, *Partition.* Each review gives a fair and often enthusiastic evaluation of the work in question. Alladi does note inaccuracies when they occur. For example, *Partition* suggests that Ramanujan was obsessed with Fermat's Last Theorem. As Alladi points out, this is far from the truth.

The aforementioned correction leads to another group of articles in the book which contrast Ramanujan with some other important mathematicians (including Fermat). These articles are really the heart of the book and are especially illuminating. they run from Galois (who died young like Ramanujan) to Jacobi (the pioneer of elliptic functions, a favorite topic of Ramanujan) to the little known L. J. Rogers (a Ramanujan contemporary of very similar talents). Alladi, who has worked in several areas of number theory and analysis, and who, as the editor of the *Ramanujan Journal*, is uniquely qualified to write these historical sketches which provide an unusual and compelling view of Ramanujan.

The remaining essays provide additional ways of looking at Ramanujan and his influence. These range from discussions of the prestigious SASTRA Ramanujan Prize, to specific accounts of how current research has been based on foundations laid by Ramanujan.

This is a great book to "dip into." While the theme is clear and coherent, each article can be read separately. Each is designed for a wide readership and can be read with enjoyment and understanding by non-mathematicians. Each article will give you a new look at Ramanujan. More generally you will come away with an enhanced appreciation of human greatness as expressed in the life and work of this Indian genius.

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