

## G. Madhavan (1947–2022)

G. Madhavan, the Executive Secretary of the Current Science Association died on 1 March 2022, after a brief illness. In his passing, this journal has lost the backbone of the organization. Madhavan shepherded the journal's office for over three decades, even while handling many other responsibilities. In the years that I was the Editor of this journal, I invariably turned to Madhavan for advice and help. In the years after my retirement, he would often call me when the news of the passing of a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences reached him. He would always ask the same question: 'Who do you think should write the obituary in *Current Science*?' I never did imagine that the day would come when I would sit down to reflect on all that Madhavan did for his surroundings, in the course of his long career, serving the institutions that he loved, the Indian Academy of Sciences and the Current Science Association.

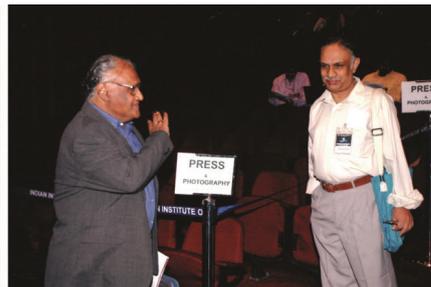
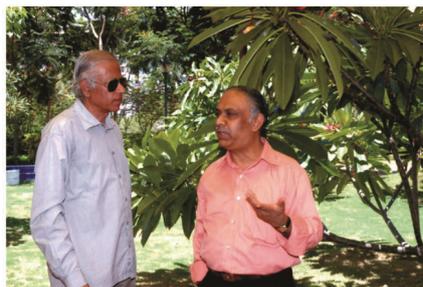
Gopalakrishnan Madhavan was born in Bangalore on 17 October 1947 into a large family of eight sons and four daughters. Financial constraints drove him to seek employment immediately after completing high school (SSLC) in 1963. His first job was in the New Government Electric Factory (NGEF) in Bangalore on a monthly salary of Rs 50. He then moved to work in a Karnataka State Government office before joining the National Aeronautical Laboratory (NAL, CSIR) in 1967, as an office assistant. In six short years Madhavan had made himself indispensable and well liked in the Materials Division. It was during his NAL tenure that Madhavan went to evening college and acquired a B.Com. degree. His entry into NAL was to be the turning point in his career. It was at NAL that he began to work for Sivaraj Ramaseshan, then the Deputy Director and head of the newly formed Materials Science Division. Ramaseshan was a man of many parts; a physicist of distinction, an influential editor, a passionate promoter of Indian scientific journals, an administrator and institution builder and above all a great motivator of all those who worked with him. Ramaseshan was not only C. V. Raman's nephew but also his student, obtaining his Ph.D. for work done at the Indian Institute of Science in the 1940s. In 1970, when Raman died, Ramaseshan assumed the role of custodian of the Raman legacy. Three distinct organizations were

located in a sylvan campus: the Raman Research Institute, the Indian Academy of Sciences founded by Raman in 1934 and the Current Science Association, which produced this journal. The journal had been started by a group of Bangalore scientists in 1932, two years before the Academy. After Raman's arrival in Bangalore in 1933 he soon assumed a dominant role in the affairs of the journal.

In the early 1970s, after Raman's passing, Ramaseshan played a key role in securing the future of the Academy and *Current Science*. One of his first steps was to persuade Madhavan to move to the Academy as secretarial assistant in 1974. Over the next four decades Madhavan would become the face of the Academy. In 1987, he was redesignated as the Deputy Executive Secretary and became the Executive Secretary in 1987, a position he held till 2008. During this period Madhavan worked closely with N. Mukunda in the rapidly expanding activities of the Science Education Panel of the Academy, including the journal *Resonance*, the Summer Research Fellowships programmes, Refresher courses for Teachers and the Lecture workshops. Subsequently, he supervised the activities of the Science Education Programmes of the Academy till 2014. In 2015, he assumed the position of Executive Secretary of the Current Science

Association, a role he had been playing for a very long time without a formal title.

I first met Madhavan in 1981 at a meeting in the Academy. Three years later I watched him at the Golden Jubilee meeting of the Academy, a key coordinator of a complex, anniversary event attended by many of India's most senior and celebrated scientists. He was always present in all events of the Academy, his calm and reassuring presence ensuring that all arrangements would work faultlessly. In 1988, Ramaseshan assumed the office of the Editor of *Current Science*. Madhavan seamlessly moved into the role of coordinating and supervising the offices of both the Academy and the Current Science Association bringing a new synergy in the two organizations. His role in *Current Science* continued till his death. He was in the office almost till the end. In 1988, when I began to assist Ramaseshan in rejuvenating *Current Science*, I met Madhavan regularly. He always seemed to be in the office ready to help with any matter. In the mid-1980s, when Ramaseshan moved to the Raman Institute, following his retirement from the Directorship of the Indian Institute of Science, his first action on reaching the office would be to ask for Madhavan; this was mostly unnecessary as Madhavan would already have appeared, files in hand.



Madhavan at the Academy: (top left) with N. Mukunda; (top right) with C. N. R. Rao; (bottom left) with (from left) H. Y. Mohan Ram, Vidyanand Nanjundiah and S. Varadarajan; (bottom right) with (second from left) R. Kumar and N. Viswanadham.

Madhavan held the offices of the journal and the Academy together for two decades, by his ability to persuade those who worked under his guidance to follow his example of total dedication to the organizations he served. He was undoubtedly helped in this role by Presidents of the Academy, who understood the long historical connection between the journal and the Academy. In later years, as institutional memories began to fade among those who led the two organizations, the task of smoothly coordinating the functioning of the offi-

ces became more difficult. Madhavan, along with his younger colleagues at the journal, remained completely loyal to the task of ensuring that this journal could maintain its tight production schedule, despite the changing environment. He was a strict supervisor for whom punctuality was a way of life. He was also a kind and generous mentor to all those who worked under him. For over a quarter of a century Madhavan was the face of the Indian Academy of Sciences. He was always there ready to help everyone from Presidents to the newly

joined assistants. How do I summarize Madhavan's sterling qualities? I can only say 'they don't make them like that anymore'. He is survived by his wife, son and daughter. He will be missed by all those who worked with him and by the Indian Academy of Sciences and *Current Science* which he served with the utmost devotion.

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