

Indian Academy of Sciences (1965–1967). He served the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) as Editor, Secretary, Vice-President and President. He left a mark in every office he held. He continued to help INSA in editing manuscripts for the biographical memoirs. He was awarded the Sunder Lal Hora Medal by INSA (1965) in recognition of his work, whose impact had been felt for a considerable length of time.

Seshachar's counsel was sought by several scientific organizations and government committees, as he was known to express his views unreservedly. He formally retired from the University of Delhi in 1971 and was appointed Professor Emeritus.

He moved to Bangalore and settled in his own home in Malleswaram. During active working life, the immediate takes precedence over the important. One seldom gets free time to do the numerous things one really likes. Most professionals store them for retirement. Seshachar updated his personal library which contained works on science, literature, religion, philosophy and biographies. The fastidious care with which he maintained his collection showed his deep love for learning. It was a delight to see his tastefully planned and well-tended garden with a rich collection of chrysanthemums, hibiscuses, roses, gerberas, dahlias, crotons and other foliage plants.

Seshachar joined the Centre for Theoretical Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and became closely associated with E. C. G. Sudarshan, the eminent theoretical physicist and a number of enthusiastic scientists. The 17 years spent in the Centre were devoted to the study and discussions on various subjects: genetics, developmental biology, evolution, ethics, education and society. He

wrote several articles on science policy and on the impact and limitations of science in the modern world.

Seshachar steadily attended classical music concerts at the Gayana Samaja with his wife and was a regular participant in the activities of the Gokhale Institute. Just as he was settling down to an enlightened and peaceful life, his wife Smt. Ratnamma, a graceful and generous lady, suddenly died. The couple had lived with devotedness. The abrupt isolation became unbearable to Seshachar. Finding no explanations to the meaning of sorrow, pain and loneliness in the science that he knew and had practised, he realized that science could not interpret realities of human life. He made a deep study of Bhagawadgita, the Upanishads and other Indian philosophical texts. In his article, 'Lessons from my Life', (*Bhavan's Journal*, Nov. 15, 1991) he states that he believed in the existence of a higher 'super-rational cognitive power' as a necessary complement to reason.

Despite solitariness, he kept himself fully occupied and wrote letters to friends about his new insights. I occasionally met him at Bangalore, sometimes with friends. On one occasion, I took two young research scholars from Delhi to meet him. They were amazed to meet a person of his age who was mentally sharp, witty, hospitable, full of zest for life, surrounded by books and objects d'art, deeply interested in diverse things and yet mystically withdrawn.

In remembering eminent people who are no more, there is a tendency to eulogize and lose sight of their frailties. The human interest becomes greater when the essence of their total personality is perceived. In his active professional days Seshachar had an overbearing personality; he was sarcastic, intolerant and was often

unclear about loyalty and sincerity. These contrasted with his pursuit of truth, creativeness, warmth, generosity and concern.

Renowned movie directors and gurus (be they artists or scientists) share a common predicament. They put in an enormous effort to help talented youngsters to attain their own thresholds of distinction. A stage often comes when the patron starts feeling envious of the protégé or the product begins to disregard the mentor. Seshachar, like other gurus before him, was not spared of this ordeal.

As a true scientist Seshachar experimented with himself. He had the boldness to write about his results. He turned from the science of the external world to the world of turmoil within. He fought contradictions and doubts with courage. Through deep reflection, he distanced despair and gained a tranquility of mind and realized the futility of 'I' and cherished the oneness of creation.

In his last days Seshachar had come to terms with death in his own way. He stated 'Indeed the success of one's life could be said to be measured by the manner one prepares to face death'. Death is inevitable and the world goes on. But for those who had known Seshachar, it is a less colourful world. Every time I met him, I felt refreshed and acquired a part of his distilled wisdom. That fountain is eternally silent. Seshachar's long career can be summed up in Khalil Gibran's words: 'In education the life of the mind proceeds from scientific experiments to intellectual theories to spiritual feeling and then to God'.

I am grateful to Prof. S. R. V. Rao, for the generous help received in preparing this note.

The author is in the Department of Botany, University of Delhi, Delhi 110 007, India

Erratum

We have received many letters pointing out an error in the last sentence in the editorial note on page 784 (Volume 66, 25 May 1994). The last sentence should read: '...this tradition of mathematics and astronomy which even studied infinite series some years earlier...', and not as printed. We regret this error which was due to mistyping.

—Editor