Obituary

Dr Madhav B. Kulkarni

On 3rd September 2015, Dr. Madhav Kulkarni (Head, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Gokhale Education Society’s Commerce College, Nashik, India) passed away peacefully at his residence.

He was 61 years old.

He was to retire from his college job in just a few months.

Dr. Kulkarni was working on a manuscript of a book on Statistics using R. On the night of September 2nd, he continued to work on his computer after his wife went to bed. When she woke up in the morning, she found that his heart had stopped while he was still sitting at his desk.

This came as sad and sudden news to all his friends and associates.

Dr. Kulkarni was a devoted teacher, researcher and social worker. He did his B.Sc. Statistics from Garware College Pune. He took up a job as a statistical assistant with Professor P V Sukhatme in Maharashtra Association for Cultivation of Sciences, Pune. While at work, he completed M.Sc. (Biometry) partly by research at the University of Pune. Later he became a lecturer of statistics in Gokhale Education Society’s H.P.T. College in Nashik and continued in the service of the society till the end. While in service he completed M.Phil. (Statistics) at University of Pune. He also completed Ph.D. (Statistics Education) at the ‘Yeshwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University’ Nashik under the guidance of Professor M N Deshpande. Dr. Kulkarni was an elected member of the International Statistical Institute.

He wrote several research papers and books on statistics. One of the books was on probability distributions. It became the basis for an online course he taught for several years through the Washington DC based company Statistics.com. His research papers were mostly on applications of statistics in various fields such as agriculture, ecology etc. He was always ready to assist researchers in analysis of their data. He carried out statistics training programs for users of statistics in all parts of India. His services were welcome wherever he went. To extreme south, he taught at IISER in Thiruanantpuram. In the north he spent time at Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun. From Imphal to Anand he travelled east and west to help scientists. People often wrote to him thanking for this. Some went so far as to say that their research project could not have been completed without his assistance. Such compliments naturally impressed the NAAC (accreditation committee) visiting his college.

Two of his projects deserve special mention.

For his MPhil thesis he studied the eucalyptus tree cultivation by farmers in Nashik district. He measured growth of trees under various soil and irrigation regimes and calculated the
age at which trees should be harvested. It seemed useful as a feasibility study to support farmers’ need for financing by banks.

During his year as a visiting faculty member at the Department of Statistics, University of Pune, Dr. Kulkarni participated in an ongoing project to assess efficacy of astrological predictions. It showed that horoscope based predictions about the IQ level of people were no better that random guessing. Dr. Kulkarni gave popular lectures on this theme in many gatherings.

As a teacher Dr Kulkarni was quite successful. His speciality was to get students involved in real life projects. This aspect inspired the young minds and added a new dimension to their understanding. He succeeded equally in science as well as commerce streams. A common belief is that commerce students find the subject of statistics boring. So, students either skip classes or simply pay no attention. Not in Dr Kulkarni’s class. To the surprise of many, his lectures had full attendance. Students spent lots of extra time with him, doing their projects and preparing reports. They liked it a lot and also learned a lot! He was available for help even if you were not formally enrolled in his class. Students were welcome in his house as well. Many students launched a career in applied statistics starting with some data analysis work with Dr Kulkarni and went on to join prestigious firms such as TCS or even RBI.

Dr Kulkarni believed that a teacher has to contribute his mite to matters of wider social interest. A teacher has to participate in the venture of enhancing societal awareness in scientific matters. So use of all media is necessary. This meant writing regularly in local Marathi newspapers such as ‘Gavkari’ and making presentations on All India Radio Nashik on topics of current interest. No wonder he became a well known personality in the city of Nashik.

Dr. Kulkarni is survived by his wife, son Swanand who pursues a career in Mechanical Engineering in USA after completing a Ph.D. in University of Tennessee and son Ashish who works as a software professional in Pune after completing a masters degree in computer science at Pune together with his career in music.