



My Search for Ramanujan: How I Learned to Count

By Ken Ono, Amir D. Aczel



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"The son of a prominent Japanese mathematician who came to the United States after World War II, Ken Ono was raised on a diet of high expectations and little praise. Rebelling against his pressure-cooker of a life, Ken determined to drop out of high school to follow his own path. To obtain his father's approval, he invoked the biography of the famous Indian mathematical prodigy Srinivasa Ramanujan, whom his father revered, who had twice flunked out of college because of his single-minded devotion to mathematics.

Ono describes his rocky path through college and graduate school, interweaving Ramanujan's story with his own and telling how at key moments, he was inspired by Ramanujan and guided by mentors who encouraged him to pursue his interest in exploring Ramanujan's mathematical legacy.

Picking up where others left off, beginning with the great English mathematician G.H. Hardy, who brought Ramanujan to Cambridge in 1914, Ono has devoted his mathematical career to understanding how in his short life, Ramanujan was able to discover so many deep mathematical truths, which Ramanujan believed had been sent to him as visions from a Hindu goddess. And it was Ramanujan who was ultimately the source of reconciliation between Ono and his parents.

Ono's search for Ramanujan ranges over three continents and crosses paths with mathematicians whose lives span the globe and the entire twentieth century and beyond. Along the way, Ken made many fascinating discoveries. The most important and surprising one of all was his own humanity."

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Editorial Review

Review

“My Search for Ramanujan,” is a combination memoir and biography by the mathematician Ken Ono, in collaboration with the late science writer Amir D. Aczel. ...[this] book is divided in two. Half is a brief, lively biography of Ramanujan, and half is an autobiography. The bridge between the two is a letter that Mr. Ono’s father, Takashi, a mathematician at Johns Hopkins, received from Ramanujan’s widow in 1984. (She had been 10 when they married.) After Ramanujan’s death she had a hard time financially. Many years later some mathematicians organized a fund to provide for her needs and to put up a statue of him. Takashi had contributed, and this was a letter of thanks. Mr. Ono’s father showed it to him and told him the story of Ramanujan. The effect was probably not what he expected. It inspired Mr. Ono to drop out of school and leave his family. The rest of this part of the book deals with the development of Mr. Ono’s life and career. ... Mr. Ono has had a fine career and has ended up as a professor of mathematics like his father. He has worked on some suggestions of Ramanujan’s and even made a pilgrimage to Ramanujan’s childhood home in India. ...Father and son have now reconciled. As for Ramanujan, someone once said that genius is the capacity to do things easily that others can’t do at all. – Wall Street Journal

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Ken Ono is the Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Mathematics at Emory University and a Fellow of the American Mathematical Society. He has received many awards for his research in number theory, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Packard Fellowship, and a Sloan Fellowship. He was awarded a Presidential

Career Award by Bill Clinton in a ceremony at the White House in 2000, and in 2005 he was named the National Science Foundation's Distinguished Teaching Scholar. Ono served as Associate Producer and Consultant for the forthcoming film on the life and work of Ramanujan, *The Man Who Knew Infinity*. Additionally, he serves as Editor-in-Chief for several journals, including *Research in the Mathematical Sciences* and *Research in Number Theory*, and he is an Editor of *The Ramanujan Journal*. He also serves as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for *Graduate Texts in Mathematics*.

Amir D. Aczel is a bestselling author and historian of science. He received his PhD in Statistics from University of Oregon. Dr. Aczel was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2004, and he is currently a visiting researcher at Boston University's Center for the Philosophy & History of Science. He has written articles that have been published by the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Jerusalem Post*, and the *Huffington Post*.

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