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Obituary: Raghu Raj Bahadur, Statistics

Raghu Raj Bahadur, Professor Emeritus in Statistics and one of the world's top theoretical statisticians, died in Chicago on June 7 after a long illness. He was 73.

"Raj was one of the architects of the modern theory of mathematical statistics," said Bahadur's colleague Stephen Stigler, the Ernest De Witt Burton Distinguished Service Professor of Statistics. "His work, which was characterized by a singular depth and elegance, changed the way statisticians think about statistical information at a fundamental level. People from all over the world made pilgrimages to see him."

Bahadur was a theorist whose work explored how much information there is in statistical data and how it can be captured so that it is useful in scientific investigation. Several concepts are named after him -- one, Bahadur efficiency, which discriminates between test statistics on the basis of large deviation probabilities, has become an important object of study for many statisticians.

"Statisticians don't have highly visible awards like the Nobel Prize, but if we did, he'd have won," Stigler said.

Bahadur was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, the International Statistical Institute, the Indian National Sciences Academy and the Indian Academy of Sciences.

Bahadur received his B.A. in 1943 and his M.A. in 1945 from the University of Delhi and his Ph.D. in 1950 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He first joined the Chicago faculty in 1950. He then spent time at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in New Delhi and the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta. He returned to the University in 1961, retiring in 1991, though he maintained an office at the University.

He is survived by his wife Thelma, of Chicago; his son Sekhar, of London; a brother, Rajesh, of Bombay and Delhi, India; a sister, Sheila Dhar, of Delhi, India; and two grandchildren. The Statistics Department will hold a memorial service in the fall. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to the University of Chicago Hospitals, mail code 1115, 5841 S. Maryland, Chicago IL 60637.
