

Confidential

TATA INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH
Homi Bhabha Road, Colaba, Bombay 400 005

20/11/78

Dear Professor Lal,

First of all Christine & I would like to thank your wife and you for all your kindness and hospitality during our stay in Ahmedabad. We were very glad to have had this opportunity to get to know various people.

Last week I had talks with quite a number of people - often more than once. As promised I give you here my - necessarily biased and based on insufficient evidence - report which I hope you will treat as not in any way to be communicated to anybody but yourself.

Of the senior people I saw Buti (twice), Pratap (once), Varma (three times), Alurkar & Bhonsle (once together). Of the slightly younger group I saw Deshpande (once), Prasanna (once) and had some very brief contacts with Sen. Of the students I saw Mohan (twice), Mrs. Basu (twice) & Rao (once, briefly).

As far as the experimentalists are concerned, Alurkar & Bhonsle clearly know their field and know what questions to ask & why. I would expect that the IPS project will be a success. Deshpande also seems to be on top of his subject, but is perhaps slightly overambitious in the projects he would like to turn to such as pulsar work. With his present ~~project set-up~~ set-up he cannot - I feel - compete with set-ups elsewhere. Perhaps this will change when he gets the bigger dish, but before setting out on a project like this, he should, I feel, consult Swarup.

Of the three senior theorists I rate Pratap highest, even though I have not a great deal of sympathy with the work of the Brussels group (but then it produced a Nobel Prize for Prigogine!). He is well on top of his subject, sees the physical aspects of it, can explain what he is doing & understand queries. I would ~~just~~ put Varma next. He is clearly very

versatile (perhaps too much so ?) and some of his work is obviously excellent. I found that he is not very good at putting his work over - in neither of his talks at the conference did he do justice to the subject matter. I do not know whether this shows a lack of understanding (I do not think so) or a lack of easy communication. I also found it difficult to make him understand queries or comments. A large amount of our conversation was devoted to his new approach to quantum mechanics to which I feel a certain (largely psychological) opposition and we agree to differences. Buti is clearly a very competent calculator who has made many contributions to plasma physics, but I do not think that it is just my *male chauvinist pig* attitude which puts her below the other two. I feel very strongly both from her papers, and from our conversations, and from conversations with her students that her physical understanding lags seriously behind her base of computation. I may well be too unfair.

Your intermediate level is clearly very good. I do not have to say anything about Sen, but Prasanna, about whose work I know a little, is also clearly a very good man and I was very pleased to hear that he is changing his interests so as to be closer to other members of the theory group.

As far as the students are concerned, Rao impressed me very much by his comments and questions at the conference. Mrs. Basu also seems very intelligent and full of promise. She certainly knew how to ask the right questions and to query any answers I gave which she thought might not be quite correct. I felt that she should go a long way with the right guidance. Mohan is very pedestrian, I fear. The problem he is working on is a quite interesting one, but he tackled it (may I say) Buti-style - calculating without first checking the physical basis for his work. I hope that I have put him to some extent on the right path.

With best regards - also to your wife,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- D. ter Haar

Cpd. avb
24. 11. 78