Lotfi A.Zadeh

He was born in 1921 in Novkhani, suburb of Baku, Soviet Azerbaijan. Born of an Azerbaijani father on assignment as a journalist from Iran, and a Russian mother who was a physician, Zadeh enjoyed a privileged life during his first 10 years in Baku. But at the age of ten, when Stalin introduced collectivization of farms throughout the Soviet Union, widespread famine followed, and the Zadeh family moved back to his father's homeland. There he continued his education in English in a private Presbyterian school in Tehran. After high school, he sat for the national university exams and placed second in the entire country. In 1942, he graduated from the University of Tehran in electrical engineering.

During World War II, he sold goods to the American Army, earning enough money to continue his education in the United States. He traveled to the United States in 1944 to pursue graduate studies, and received the S.M. degree in Electrical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1946. Subsequently, he joined the faculty of Columbia University as an instructor in Electrical Engineering, where he earned the Ph.D. degree in 1949 and was appointed assistant professor in 1950. He was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1957.

In 1965, Zadeh authored his seminal paper on *fuzzy sets*. This landmark paper initiated a new direction which, over the past three decades, has led to a vast literature and a rapidly growing number of applications ranging from consumer products to subway trains and decision-support systems. In the future, the impact of fuzzy set theory-or fuzzy logic, as it is commonly referred to today-is likely to be felt not only in the realm of products and manufacturing, but also in basic sciences, and especially in mathematics, physics and chemistry.

In the year 1994, an Azerbaijni journalist characterized Lotfi- Zadeh as "down-to-earth", always holding abstract scientific concepts up to a reality check of their practical utility of whether they "do us any good." This a very rare quality of a scientist, to think whether scientific concepts have "good" or "bad" implications on the future of humankind.