

## Concern for mediocrity bane of education

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**T**HE primary problem with the education system is that it is only concerned with the mass of the average or even below-average students while ignoring totally the interests of the talented and the bright, said Dr. D.P. Verma, Head of the department of Mathematics at Science College. He was speaking at a function to observe the birth anniversary of the late mathematical genius Srinivas Ramanujan. The function was organised by the Ramanujan School of Mathematics.

Refuting the perception that Bihar is starved of talents, Dr. Verma pointed out that in the United States alone the Science College Alumni Association boasted of a membership of over 15 thousand. Despite the education system, he quipped, Bihar was still capable of throwing up talented students in various fields. The college which sends the highest number of students to the Indian Institutes of Technology, he said, was the Science College. And while the state has just one-tenth of the country's population it still manages to corner between 20 to 25 per cent of central services every year, he added.

Dr. Verma recalled how Ramanujan himself could not study beyond his school because he was denied the scholarship that he had received all through his schooling. While the scholarship was denied because the budding mathematician failed in English, that denial could not kill the talent. The exceptional genius of Ramanujan manifested itself when he secured a job as a clerk but continued to solve mathematical problems on a slate. A slate, because he could not afford to buy paper. He would pick up scraps of paper lying on the floor and put down his solutions on them.

The system which unsuccessfully tried to stifle the genius of Ramanujan, said Dr. Verma, has remained more or less the same. Third-raters were getting into teaching because even clerks were being offered better service conditions in the state. Such teachers were ill-equipped to handle the inquisitive minds of their pupils. If a student dares to ask the teacher why 17 multiplied by two happens to be 34 and nothing more or less, he added, tongue in cheek, he is more likely to have his ears boxed rather than an answer.

Dr. Verma, who had taught Vashisht Narayan Singh, the mathematician from Bihar who became schizo-

phrenic and is undergoing treatment at Bangalore, said that Dr. Vashisht Narayan Singh's intellectual arrogance proved to be his Achilles' heel. Teaching and research, he said, required a great deal of sacrifice and dedication and only the humblest can do well at the altar of knowledge. Newton, he pointed out, was asked to dwell on his achievements towards the fagend of his career. And Newton is said to have modestly replied that he did not consider his achievements worth much. Dr. Verma went on to say that one of his students, Anand Kumar, has shown great promise but he ran the risk of becoming arrogant.

Anand Kumar, still a student in Science College, founded the Ramanujan School of Mathematics in 1989, recalled Professor Bal Gangadhar Prasad of BN College. The objective was to promote 'original thinking' in Mathematics. Since then the school has conducted Mathematics classes by charging a nominal fee from students. And recently, the school has begun to prepare students for the Maths Olympiad, a task which is undertaken by BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre) and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay. The school held a contest recently on 'how to popularise Mathematics'. The first three prizes were given away at today's function to Kumar Abhishek, Shanti Bhushan and Mahanand Jha respectively.

The state's education minister, Dr. Ram Chandra Purve, inaugurated the function and candidly admitted that the teaching community and the government had failed to give the desired fillip to education. He recalled the contribution of the British professor, Hardy, at Trinity College, Cambridge, who received a letter from a clerk in Madras and was impressed enough to arrange for his journey to England. This was how Srinivas Ramanujan was eventually allowed to pursue his vocation. Unfortunately, Dr. Purve said, there were not too many like Professor Hardy here.

Others who spoke included Dr. Vinay Kanth, Professor Bal Gangadhar Prasad and several members of the school. Dr. Dina Nath Sharan proposed a vote of thanks.

## गणित के क्षेत्रमें रामानुजम का योगदान महत्वपूर्ण (सांस्कृतिक प्रतिनिधि)

पटना, २२ दिसम्बर। शिक्षा मंत्री रामचंद्र पूर्वे ने आज कहा कि रामानुजम ने संघर्षपूर्ण जीवन व्यतीत करते हुए भी गणित के क्षेत्र में बहुत बड़ा योगदान दिया। छात्रों को संघर्ष से नहीं घबराना चाहिए तथा रामानुजम के जीवन से शिक्षा लेनी चाहिए।

शिक्षा मंत्री रामानुजम स्कूल ऑफ मैथेमेटिक्स द्वारा प्रख्यात गणितज्ञ एवं वैज्ञानिक रामानुजम की जयंती का उद्घाटन कर रहे थे। उन्होंने इस अवसर पर संस्था को पांच हजार की राशि प्रदान करने की घोषणा की।

मुख्य अतिथि पद से 'द टाइम्स ऑफ इंडिया' के स्थानीय सम्पादक उत्तम सेन गुप्ता ने गणित की महत्ता पर प्रकाश डालते हुए छात्रों से गणित में अभिरुचि का आह्वान किया।

मुख्य वक्ता के रूप में आमंत्रित सायंस कालेज में गणित विभाग के अध्यक्ष देवी प्रसाद वर्मा ने आनन्द कुमार की प्रशंसा करते कहा कि उनसे गणित जगत को काफी उम्मीदें हैं। उन्होंने गणित को साधना बताते हुए अहंकार से दूर रहने का आह्वान किया।

इस अवसर पर बी.एन. कालेज के प्राध्यापक बाल गंगाधर प्रसाद, विनय कंठ तथा रंजन ने उदीयमान गणितज्ञ आनन्द कुमार के लिए बिहार सरकार से छात्रवृत्ति की मांग की।