

Role of Indian science managers

I was delighted to read 'Future of Science in India' by V. Ramamurthy (*Curr. Sci.*, 1999, **77**, 1568) as a reaction to C. N. R. Rao's article published in *Science*¹. Since the days of Nehru, Indian scientists have dominated the scientific establishment in India. We had a galaxy of Indian scientists at the helm of affairs, viz. Homi Bhabha in control of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), S. S. Bhatnagar, incharge of Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) and D. S. Kothari, responsible for guiding the affairs of Indian Universities as Chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC). In addition, Kothari served as Scientific Advisor in Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO). In the next generation, we have had luminaries like Vikram Sarabhai, M. G. K. Menon, Raja Ramanna and Yash Pal. This tradition continues till this day with CSIR and Department of Science & Technology and similar other organizations responsible for promotion of scientific re-

search in India being headed by eminent scientists. M. G. K. Menon and Raja Ramanna have even occupied ministerial berths in the Indian Government.

The gloomy picture for the future of Indian science was also highlighted by C. N. R. Rao and P. Rama Rao at the 85th session of Indian Science Congress held during 3–7 January, 1998 at Hyderabad^{2,3}. In response to their criticism, I suggested some remedies in my article⁴ published in *Current Science*. I agree with the viewpoint of Ramamurthy that the failure of Indian science, if any, is not due to lack of power enjoyed by Indian scientists over the Indian scientific system, but rather, despite it.

I do not agree with Ramamurthy that Western culture is responsible for promotion of science and Indian culture inhibits it. The best of Indian science was produced during the 'golden era' of thirties of last century under the aegis of traditional Indian culture, which is much more liberated now (if liberation

means westernization of Indian culture). There is a general decline in science and it is a global phenomenon. The number of students opting for Ph D in science has fallen by 100 per cent in Germany during the last decade⁵. Unless the job situation improves, the Indian science will not attract the younger generation to science.

1. Rao, C. N. R., *Science*, 1999, **286**, 1295.
2. Arunachalam, S., *Curr. Sci.*, 1998, **74**, 397–402.
3. Rama Rao, P., *Curr. Sci.*, 1998, **74**, 418–432.
4. Virk, H. S., *Curr. Sci.*, 1998, **74**, 817–818.
5. Brandt, R., University of Merburg, 1999, pers. commun..

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Plight of young post-doctoral fellows

We wish to draw the attention of policy makers, science administrators and scientific research funding agencies to the plight of young post-doctoral fellows (PDFs). The young researchers bring out the results of innovative and up-to-date research studies before the society. After the termination of the fixed tenure of a post-doctoral research fellowship of 3 to 5 years, they become unfit for a job commensurate with their academic qualifications.

Surprisingly enough, their numbers in the R&D have been decreasing as issues like job security remain ambiguous in the existing policy frame work.

Despite several representations to the HRD Ministry, the PDFs are still awaiting a favourable verdict. This has

put a question mark on their careers. No doubt, some of the best academic brains of the country are either without jobs or have decided to pursue their careers abroad. Shabby treatment to the PDFs in the country has also prompted many to pursue careers other than academics.

We would like give a few suggestions to improve the situations. (1) As research is a process of creating/developing new facts/perception in the field of knowledge, PDFs must be allowed to continue their research even after the completion of their research tenures. (2) PDFs should be given allowances like DA, CCA, GPF, medical reimbursement and pension facilities which are admissible to other academics/scientists em-

ployed with the same qualifications. (3) In order to assess the progress made by PDFs a suitable policy may be adopted by the funding agencies like CSIR, DST, ICMR, etc. like those of UGC for assessing the work of a Research Scientist (Group A, B, C) by a committee of 3 experts before the expiry of each five year period.

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