

SHOWCASE SEMINAR ON HISTORY OF MATHEMATICS

Ramjas College: University of Delhi, December 13-14, 2004

(A Brief Report by Raj Kumari Bahl)

An International Showcase Seminar on History of Mathematics was held at Ramjas College, University of Delhi from December 13-14, 2004. The seminar was organized by the Mathematics & Statistics Department of Ramjas College. The 60 participants included delegates from several countries including USA, UK, Canada, China, Germany, Greece, Iran, Israel, Netherlands and Pakistan apart from a number of Indian participants. It provided an opportunity to historians of mathematics the world over to come together and participate in the deliberations, share their experiences and give suggestions for the development of the subject. The venue of the conference was the high-tech seminar room of Ramjas College.

The Seminar was inaugurated by Shri. Brij Mohan Gupta, *Chairman, Ramjas College Governing Body*. In his inaugural remarks, Shri Ram Kanwar Gupta, *Vice-Chairman, Ramjas College Governing Body*, felt it was a historic moment for the college and promised to extend full support and cooperation for more such activities in the college. In his welcome address Dr. Rajendra Prasad, *Principal, Ramjas College*, emphasized the role of the history of mathematics in learning mathematics. He said that it was a moment of pride for the college to stage an international seminar on the subject. The genesis, importance and the reasons behind organizing the Showcase Seminar were explained by Professor B S Yadav, *Secretary, Indian Society for History of Mathematics*. The inaugural session ended with the remarks by Shri Subhash Chander, the Convener of the Seminar.

The seminar included four lively sessions including an interactive one which involved direct interaction with the students on the Mathematics History in Education. The interactive session was chaired by Prof. Hari Shankar, *Univ. of Northern Iowa, USA*. The panelists were Prof. Dinesh Singh, *Univ. of Delhi*, Dr. Saeed S Hashemi, *Imam Hussain Univ., Iran*, Prof. V G Tikekar, *I.I.Sc. Bangalore*, Prof. V Lakshmikantham, *Florida Inst. of Technology, USA* and Prof. Vitali Milman, *Tel Aviv Univ., Israel*.

The following invited talks were presented:

V Laksmikantham, Florida Institute of Technology, USA: *The Chronology of Ancient Astronomers and Mathematicians*.

Wenlin Li, President, Chinese Society for History of Mathematics: *On the Mechanical Character of Descartes' Geometry*.

G.S.Pandey, President, Indian Society for History of Mathematics: *Hisab al-Hind*.

Kim Leslie Plofker, University of Utrecht, Netherlands: *Indian Numerical Methods and their Transmission to other Cultures*.

S. Leela, State Univ. of New York, USA: *Madhava, the Medieval Astronomer and Mathematician*.

Annette Imhausen, Trinity Hall, Cambridge: *Egyptian Mathematical Techniques-A New Analysis*.

Konstantinos Nikolantonakis, University of Thesslia, Greece: *Serenus of Antinosis : between Appolonios of Perga and Thabit Ibn Qurra*.

E Von Collani, University of Wuerzburg, Germany: *The Amazing Success Story of Statistics*.

V.G.Tikekar, Formerly at I.I.Sc. Bangalore: *Some Gems by known and not-so-known Mathematicians*.

Duan Yaoyong, Institute for the History of Natural Sciences, China: *Some Discussions about how Indian Trigonometry affected Chinese Calendar-Calculation in Tang Dynasty.*

Summaries of the above talks and papers were available in the form of printed material which was provided to all the participants along with a write-up about the host-Ramjas College, brief CV of speakers and a schedule of the Seminar.

Apart from these talks, the seminar also included the following two lively panel discussions:

History of Mathematical Sciences in India. This was chaired by Prof. G S Pandey, *IIAS, Simla*. The panelists were: Prof. B S Yadav, *ISHM*, Prof. Bhu Dev Sharma, *Clark Atlanta Univ., USA*, Prof. S L Singh, *Gurukul Kangri Univ., Haridwar* and Prof. S Leela, *State Univ. of New York, USA*

History of Mathematical Sciences in the East. This was chaired by Prof. Wenlin Li, *Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing*. The panelists were: Dr. Annette Imhausen, *Trinity Hall, Cambridge* Dr. Kim Leslie Plofker, *Univ. of Utrecht, Netherlands*, Prof. Nachum Dershowitz, *Tel Aviv Univ., Israel* and Dr. Xiao Yunhong, *IHNS, China*

Other highlights of the Seminar included a group photograph of all the delegates with the organizers, a mesmerizing cultural program presented by the students of Cultural Society of Ramjas College which was praised by one and all; and above all the 'Rangoli' made by the student volunteers at the entrance of the Auditorium- the venue for the cultural program. The rangoli, which was artistically designed by flowers and colours, showed a glimpse of the rich heritage of Indian culture. Last but not the least, lunch and dinner on both the days were a treat for the taste buds. These were hosted by Shri Brij Mohan Gupta, the Chairman of Ramjas College Governing Body and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Principal of the college.

The Valedictory address was delivered by Prof. B S Yadav. He emphasized that the aim of this symposia is to promote discussions, research, teaching and publications on the history and philosophy of mathematics. Participants freely expressed their comments and observations, shared their experiences and gave fruitful suggestions for the future. They also thanked the student volunteers of Ramjas College for their round the clock cooperation and help. The organizers utilized this opportunity to express their gratitude to all those who helped them in organizing the seminar. They also thanked M/S Travel Corporation of India, for the excellent travel arrangements made by them. The seminar concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Babita Goyal, co-convener of the seminar.

The organizers received financial assistance for organizing the seminar from the following agencies:

- Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR)
- Indian National Science Academy (INSA)
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

The seminar was covered by Times of India and its 'Education Times' issue dated 20th December, 2004 contained a comprehensive write-up about the seminar in the item entitled 'Number Crunching-in a Mathematical Vein.'