

component of teaching. Huge grants were once given and even separate buildings were erected for tutorials. Now the buildings are used for anything but the avowed purpose. Even when tutorials are shown in teachers' time-tables, they are not taken seriously, or at all. Very few teachers would like to have themselves and their courses evaluated by students. Their knowledge in their own areas of specialization is poor and naught in related subjects. Indeed, many of our professors are only playing professors; they are no professors in their real life. Whenever I enter the reading room of the central science library (DU) I find that those sitting there are mostly M Phil/Ph D students preparing for civil services or some such recruitment examinations. Not even ten per cent of the entrants to the library are teachers. This can be verified from the check-in registers. The library, as also the other educational infrastructures are underutilized. Given this situation, no improvement in the quality of science education can be expected.

2. We have somehow failed to develop a work culture in our educational institutions. There are many among the teaching faculty who have gone abroad and worked in eminent places of learning. Yet, when they are back home, they revert to the prevailing milieu of indifference. Administrators fail to maintain discipline among the employees. Most of them, including those provided with accommodation on the campus, turn up to work about half an hour late. There is now a convention that the muster rolls are open for 30 minutes after the 'official' checking time so that the employees can come in according to their convenience. Certainly,

no legislation or amendment to the constitution is needed to empower the administrators to take action against those who are not punctual. Evidently, the administrators are just not bothered about it. Or, are they afraid of trade unions controlled by recalcitrant employees?

3. Teaching programmes rarely, if ever, start on time. Admission formalities, choice and assignment of elective courses and such other trifling matters take several weeks. Examinations are not held in time and the results are not declared promptly.

4. Morbid trade unionism of teachers as well as non-teaching employees has ensured that all benefits of 'service' and much more is granted for no service *sensu stricto*. The impression one gets is that everyone is somehow out to exploit monetary benefits without a sense of remorse for not doing what is due in return. Automatic promotion to higher academic designations and the pernicious practice of re-employing all teachers for five years after superannuation has completed the process of degeneration of the university into an academic desert.

One can dwell further on the theme outlined above. However, the point has been made. So let us now pause to consider how to stem the rot. One thing is clear, at least to me: no foreign experts' advice or assistance is needed. Financial crunch is no doubt a handicap; but there are many ways of better utilization of the funds available. We can turn the tide only if our commitment to the task before us is genuine. The hypocrisy and dishonesty in our 'well prepared' plans and policy statements have to be noticed and highlighted. Both gloom and euphoria are pathological. Let us not pretend that

everything is in order in our universities. Let us also not think that we cannot do anything without help from outside. Those who paint a gloomy picture of Indian science education have only to watch how some special courses (e.g. biotechnology in the University of Poona) are run. They will be pleasantly surprised. We need not (and surely cannot) start reforms with a violent bang. The causes of degeneration narrated above are not imaginary; nor is their elimination merely a pipe dream. Improved salaries and perks is not enough to bring about the reforms that are urgently needed. There is no substitute for cultivating a scholarly attitude. There can be no compromise in matters of commitment and devotion to duty. Once the teaching community wakes up from its pathological slumber, everything will start improving, perhaps slowly, but no doubt, surely.

Finally, let us see the NSU proposal against the perspective portrayed above. We shall welcome the idea wholeheartedly only after showing that we are willing to put our own house in order. I greatly appreciate the sentiments of the NRI scientists who have come forward with a generous gesture for a noble cause. We shall have deserved their affection only after we have done what ought to be and can be done at our end. Let us therefore think not twice, but several times, before sinking Rs 200 crores into the proposed NSU.

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The National Science University

The ailments of the Universities have been very nicely pointed out (*Curr. Sci.*, 1994, 67, 503-508) and these are all known to us. But nowhere has any treatment been prescribed. The general suggestions like devotion to teaching, sincerity of teachers, choice of good teachers, etc. are so general that those cannot be solved under the present system, specially the University system in the

country. If devoted teachers were available there would have been no problem at all. But how to find them, how to recruit them under the present political pressure, caste system, altruism etc. and how to fire them when they do not measure up? Moreover, every teacher feels he is devoted and the best possible teacher, how do we rectify this attitude? The main source of trouble is due to the

fact that our selection system is wrong.

More and more Universities have been created in the country with the hope that they will not have the problems of the old ones. They remain better for sometime no doubt, but eventually they catch up with the old ones. This write-up is a beautiful analysis of the present day university system but there the matter ends.

The main attraction is its title 'National Science University'. However, there is no argument anywhere for a separate Science University. The coexistence with arts, law, social sciences, etc. is welcome for the science departments. Why have those to be isolated? I have myself one explanation in my mind. The troubles of

the universities mostly originate (not always) from the arts, law and social science departments, therefore, in isolation, a Science University may be in a somewhat advantageous position. But where is the guarantee if the basic problems of the Universities are not solved? We have to seriously ponder on this issue without

creating more and more Universities.

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Pancharatnam

Permit me a personal note to say how astounded I was to see the picture in the second column on page 291 of the Pancharatnam memorial issue (*Curr. Sci.*, 1994, 67, 290–292). The picture shows Prema, Pancharatnam, myself to his right, and friends. The building in the background is, I think, either 'the other end' of the Clarendon or Keeble College. The picture was taken by one of our gang on our way to Startford-upon-Avon. We had stopped over at Oxford one very hot

summer day of 1966.

Pancharatnam had just showed me around his lab, full of lasers and largish Helmholtz coils. He explained to me his on-going work on optical pumping, etc. I made one of my usual brash, off-the-cuff remarks about spin-orientation in a slowly-changing magnetic field (or some such). Pancharatnam took the remark seriously enough to say that needed to be investigated. Believe it or not, right there, when that picture was taken, Pancharat-

nam is asking me if I would want to work with him for a Ph D after I finished my Master's in Cranfield!

That picture records a road not taken, another might-have-been in my wayward professional life!

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Plagiarism

We publish below a letter by V. S. Kale. It is a reaction to a paper entitled 'Equation of estimation of sedimentation rates: Applications to sequence stratigraphy' by M. Aslam, Department of Geology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202 001 published in Current Science (67(5), 10 September 1994, pp. 396–397). The paper was refereed as usual. It is unfortunate that the referee did not see that large parts of the paper were lifted verbatim by the author from a previously published paper. We wrote to the author seeking his clarification but we did not receive a satisfactory reply.

After careful investigation we found the allegation made by V. S. Kale has much substance to it. We are sorry we published Aslam's paper. We request the readers to treat this paper as not published in Current Science. Hence this will not be indexed. We will be grateful if our referees help us in seeing that such cases, even though few and far between, are not repeated.

— Editor

I am a subscriber to *Current Science* and have received the latest issue (dated 10 September 1994, Volume 67, No. 5) only yesterday. It is with a very heavy heart and due sadness that I am to communicate to you a case of very obvious plagiarism which has been conducted in one of the 'Research Communications' (page numbers 396–397) published in this issue of the Journal.

Many paragraphs, figures (1, 2) and equations have been taken *verbatim* from a paper written by Cant (*Basin Research*, 1989, 2, 73–81, published by Blackwell, UK). It is significant to note that the relevant paper from which the material

has been copied and reproduced does not find any mention in the listing of citations, though an earlier paper by Cant has been cited; as it was in the 1989 paper.

If this is not plagiarism, we need to redefine the word.

It is my misfortune that this came to my notice and that I cannot keep silent about it. It is such individual cases of unscrupulous practices which go unreported and unpunished that bring a bad name to Indian Science, with the result that even sincere workers are looked at with suspicion by the outside world. Do we want to persist with this? As the

Editor of the Journal, one would appreciate and understand that it is practically impossible for you to be personally aware of each and every publication, given the overall reliance on the review process. However, it is for you now to take some firm and clear cut stand against such unfair practices by isolated unscrupulous individual cheats, so as to deter anyone from trying it again.

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