



DREAM 2047

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Ham Radio demonstration organised by Vigyan Prasar at India Gate Lawns during August 1-16, 1998. Sandeep Baruah, VU2MSY, Coordinator (Ham Radio), Vigyan Prasar, (sitting first from left) and two other hams (Rakesh, VU2RDZ & Sunil VU2UKR) from New Delhi demonstrating ham radio to a young visitor.

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New Publication

❑ **Parmanu Se Sitaron Tak**
(Hindi version of One, Two, Three ... Infinity by George Gamow)
By Rakesh Popli
Pages: 400 Price: (Hardback) Rs. 99

Forthcoming Publication

❑ **Development and Valuation of
Urban Properties**
By P. K. Ratho
Pages: 400 Price: (Hardback) Rs. 250

VP NEWS

Chhoo-Mantar

A 52 episode radio series "CHHOO-MANTAR", jointly produced by Vigyan Prasar and AIR, Delhi, will be on the air every Saturday between 8.00 and 8.30 p.m. on Delhi A beginning October 3, 1998. The serial aims at addressing the science behind miracles and is envisaged to be an interactive programme. Further details can be obtained by either writing to us or visiting <http://www.vigyanprasar.com>

Fourth Delhi Book Fair

Vigyan Prasar participated in the Fourth Delhi Book Fair, organised jointly by the India Trade Promotion Organisation and the Federation of Indian Publishers at the Pragati Maidan during 8-16 August 1998.

Ham Radio Demonstration

The culmination of the year-long celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence was marked by special events during August 1998. One of them was an exhibition organised at India Gate lawns during 1-16 August, jointly by Vigyan Prasar and NCSTC. The event was successful in familiarising people with the role of science and technology in the development of the country and also in projecting a vision of the country for the next 50 years. As part of the exhibition, a Ham radio demonstration was organised by Vigyan Prasar to popularise the hobby. Many on-the-air radio contacts around the world were established together with local ones. Vigyan Prasar, incidentally, is chalking out an elaborate programme to popularise amateur radio amongst school children.

... think scientifically, act scientifically ... think scientifically, act scientifically ... think scientifically, act ...

Vigyan Prasar of my dreams!

"Dream-2047" refers to the building of the India of our dreams. Time frame for that has to be necessarily long: 5-10 years, or even longer! But for Vigyan Prasar (VP) of my dreams, I am not prepared to wait even for 5 years. It has to start taking shape before we enter the new millenium.

What would VP of my dreams be like?

On the whole I would like to see all our activities and operations scaled up by orders of magnitude - without similar hikes necessarily in budgetary support from the Government. I would like to see members of the university community, those from the IITs and professional colleges of all kinds, and those from our research laboratories in different sectors all over the country, to be actively involved with Vigyan Prasar in a variety of ways - writing books, preparing back-grounders for our audio/video programmes, translation, editing and vetting of manuscripts, contributing to different sections of our homepage on the Internet, giving popular public lectures-cum-demonstrations, helping us select our staff, acting as resource persons and referees for our projects, acting as bridge between VP and common people and communities in their vicinities, acting as faculty for our training programmes, and more. I would also like to see a large number of highly educated and qualified housewives all over the country getting involved with Vigyan Prasar activities in many different ways depending on time available, their interests and special expertise.

Coming to specifics, let me begin with three major activities, which have already taken some shape: publications programme, audio-video productions and VIPRIS, the Vigyan Prasar Information System. VP does umpteen other things - perhaps not yet on a large enough scale, but just as important - perhaps, I will dwell on them in one of our future issues.

I would like to see not only language versions of major VP titles regularly

appearing in all major Indian languages, but also well written original popular science titles in these languages, being brought out in large numbers on a whole range of topics/subjects. At some stage, there would be titles aimed at specific age groups and specific audiences. Alongside, I would like to see multiple outlets for VP publications in all major towns and cities, besides several, on an average in every district of the country. There are already and there would be in future many VP titles which, with some marketing effort, could sell well in a number of foreign countries. Soon enough, I would like to see authors, academics, corporates, and book publishers/distributors all over the country vying with each other to get associated with Vigyan Prasar.

In so far as Vigyan Prasar's audio-visual productions are concerned, my dream is to see VP video-programmes showing on all channels and also on all Doordarshan Kendras around the country in their respective local languages at different times on different days of the week - and also to hear VP audio programmes from all AIR stations including FM stations in all major metropolitan cities and big towns in different languages on different days of the week.

I would also like to see our programmes being exported to several foreign countries for dissemination in both broadcast/non broadcast modes, with or without dubbing.

Eventually, I would like to see some daily science programmes on radio and TV as well, obviously sponsored enthusiastically by the Indian corporate sector. New and innovative VP quickies and short programmes would make their own mark and a name for Vigyan Prasar on television.

For VIPRIS, I have a dream which is certainly realisable, but it would require a lot of hard and dedicated work not only from VP staff but also from a number of individuals and dedicated groups that would be contributing to different elements of VIPRIS. Among other things, VIPRIS would have some of the most

comprehensive databases on a very wide and useful range of subjects, for a variety of science communicators, professionals and amateur users, students, teachers, potential industrialists, entrepreneurs, aspirants for awards and others; it will also have a large number of S&T related information "products" and "services" which would respond to needs, demands and concerns of its users.

As an important element of VIPRIS, VP homepage on the Internet would become the first preferred destination of any and all kinds of queries and questions from around the globe concerning science & technology (S&T) in India. Visitors to the VP website would be able to order VP software items (like books, cassettes, kits, charts and posters etc.) on-line (and also pay for it on-line, when that becomes legal, if it is not already, in India.) I would like to see the "S & T News" on the VP homepage, coming from primary sources - in the form of a large number of selected authorised and qualified VP correspondents/contributors located in scientific, technical, academic, research and development institutions (covering all broad areas) around the country. This way, VP homepage would become a prime source for the media around the globe for news on major S&T developments in India.

Product ideas picked from our site would begin ending up as useful products in markets worldwide. Tens of thousands of individuals around the world would be visiting our site every day. VP publications, VP audio-visual productions and VIPRIS would so dominate the scene in their respective areas that they would in some years from now become separate entities in their own right under the VP umbrella.

This is only a part of my dream for Vigyan Prasar. There is much more to it than what has been indicated. But then you get the general idea! We would welcome readers' views and reaction.

NKS

The Information System - VIPRIS

The need for an information system, that can effectively provide information on various aspects of science and technology (S&T), especially in the Indian context, cannot be over-emphasized. Putting such a system together has been a dream of Vigyan Prasar. Out of this dream has emerged the notion of VIPRIS — the Vigyan Prasar Information System — which can cater to the S&T information needs of organisations, communicators, scientists, students, general public..., in short, of any one in need of information on science and technology. Initially a project report was prepared by an IT professional. The vision was fine tuned. Provision was also made for including innovations and newer ideas; for information technology is a rapidly changing field, and fast emerging possibilities can hardly be ignored. Advancements in computer technologies, hardware and software — along with continuing integration of computer, video, audio and telecommunication technologies — are opening up unprecedented opportunities for new applications. In this context, we may mention the revolutionary impact of the Internet. Understanding the information needs of specific target groups and identifying the best mode of providing the required information is the underlying philosophy of VIPRIS.

The utility value of databases on specific subject areas can indeed be very high. For instance, just imagine how useful an S&T atlas for each of India's states could be if it were to have information on the S&T institutions and government departments of the state, the scientific manpower, the available resources, its environment and so on. Or an exclusive database on environment, environmental laws and regulations, agencies working towards environmental protection and other related issues. Comprehensive databases on such areas and many more can easily be visualised. Vigyan Prasar did an exercise based on a survey of S&T coverage in newspapers over a 3-month period, done for NSCTC some years ago, and came up with a long list of areas for potential databases prioritized as per their popularity. It then proceeded to find out if bits and pieces of databases already existed, the agencies to be contacted, designing a front end for the database and finally commissioning the task. This exercise resulted in the commissioning of the first phase of a database on environment, i.e., "Environment and safety laws, regulation and guidance documents". This part of the database is almost ready; other phases of this project are likely to be commissioned soon. Similar other projects are under formulation and we would have much to look forward to.

There can be little doubt that newspapers are a simple, affordable link between people and information. This would be the most effective means of reaching out to varied groups. Engineering the inclusion of exclusive science pages or dedicated columns in newspapers can be viewed as an important step in enhancing science communication. Having already initiated such measures, Vigyan Prasar has gone further. It is currently compiling science news clippings from 122 odd newspapers and magazines, both in English and Hindi, in the form of VIPRIS Clip Set. This fortnightly publication has the additional features of keyword indexing and theme-wise organisation of news items under some 15 of them. We also intend, in due time, to convert the clippings into a database.

Today, the Internet and of course the World Wide Web is proving to be an efficient and cost effective mode of communication. Utilizing this medium at the first available opportunity, Vigyan Prasar launched its site as early as September 1996. The site offers daily science news,

Memoirs of Ruchi Ram Sahni

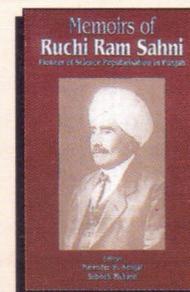
Pioneer of science
popularisation in Punjab

Editors:

Narender K Sehgal and
Subodh Mahanti

(Paperback) Pages: 264

Price: Rs. 60



Recollections of an unsung hero

Professor Ruchi Ram Sahni is not a name that people are likely to recognise — let alone an average Indian, not even someone from the Indian scientific community. Which is indeed a pity. For, this unsung hero of Indian science from the pre-independence era should have been accorded as prominent a place in the annals as the likes of P.C. Ray, J.C. Bose (RRS's contemporaries), S.N. Bose, M.N. Saha and C.V. Raman. The late 19th century and the early 20th century truly constituted a period of Indian "renaissance" — in arts, literature, and science — to which RRS belonged. It was a period of cultural and intellectual ferment which threw up remarkable men and women who dedicated themselves to building a progressive and self-reliant independent India. However, the unfortunate fact of history is that while the circumstances and the manner of evolution of post-independent India made some better known and remembered, others like RRS were forgotten... RRS was a chemist by training but his historic contribution is not in the field of research and discovery — and may be that is why he is not as well-known as the others of his time — but in popularising science among the common people. In that respect his contributions were unique. Though the sub-title of the book refers to him as the pioneer of science popularisation in Punjab, his were pioneering efforts in the entire country. And it may not be an exaggeration to say that they remain unique to this day considering that the post-independence Indian scientific community has, by and large, accorded little importance to communicating science to the public...

Like RRS in Punjab, one can be certain that there must have been others in other parts of the country who must have contributed to the cause of popularising science... By spreading the awareness about RRS, this Memoirs should also serve the important purpose of spurring researchers to unearth information and material about other unsung heroes of Indian science.

R. Ramachandran

The Economic Times

(In addition to English, the book is now also available in Hindi, Marathi and Punjabi)

interviews with scientists, features of current interest, a discussion forum, an online magazine - ComCom - and lots more. With many new options in designing web pages, the constant endeavour is to put up as elegant and informative a site as possible. There is also a conscious effort to provide a unique identity to the site, as one that closely identifies itself with S&T in India. A visit to our site, <http://www.vigyanprasar.com> would surely prove fruitful.

Though electronic Bulletin Board Services (BBS)s are not as fashionable as they were a year ago, their utility via a local dial-up connection should not be underestimated. Strengthening the BBS activity by providing a common platform to anyone interested in science to share views and ideas is an important task of Vigyan Prasar. Currently, a project to promote extensive usage of BBS in Delhi schools is under formulation.

The activities envisaged for VIPRIS are indeed many. For instance, we have just come out with two multimedia CD-ROMs: "The Rustless Wonder" and "Mad, Mad, Mad Cow" [each priced at Rs. 995]. We hope to share many more ideas in our future issues.

Bookshelf

NCSTC-HORNBILL Natural history Series

(Published jointly with the Sanctuary Magazine)

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Ready-to-print Science Pages

Augment science coverage in newspapers. These pages appear in four languages - Hindi, Urdu, Marathi and English in about 50 leading newspapers and/or their editions. The project is handled by the United Newspapers Network.

Radioscope

This monthly science magazine on AIR includes news coverage provided by VP on Indian developments in science and technology.

World of Science

Regular column in Employment news.

Daily Science News

on the Vigyan Prasar website

Get to know about our audio-visual Programmes in the next issue.

We have tried to give a brief insight into our organisation. We would be providing further elaboration in our subsequent issues. But at every stage, we value your reactions and look forward to hearing from you. We are available at:

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