



DREAM

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VP News

Vigyan Prasar Brings out Popular Science Books in Braille

The first set of books in Braille brought out by Vigyan Prasar for visually handicapped children was released by Honourable Minister of State for Science and Technology, Shri Bachi Singh Rawat, on the occasion of the National Science Day on February 27, 2002. Also present at the function were Honourable Union Minister for Science and Technology and Human Resource Development, Prof. Murl Manohar Joshi, Prof. V.S. Ramamurthy, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Dr. (Mrs) Manju Sharma, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology.



Honourable Minister of State for Science and Technology, Shri Bachi Singh Rawat, releases popular science books in Braille brought out by Vigyan Prasar, in presence of Honourable Union Minister for Science and Technology, Prof. Murl Manohar Joshi. Also seen are Prof. V.S. Ramamurthy, Secretary, DST, and Dr. (Mrs) Manju Sharma, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology.

The Minister presented the books in Braille –*Kahani Map tol Ki, Khel Khel Mein* and *Let's Sing and Play* – to two children from National Association for the Blind (Photo on page 21). Vigyan Prasar plans to bring many more of its popular science titles in Braille in the near future.

Launching of NSTMIS Website

National Science and Technology Management Information System (NSTMIS), Department of Science & Technology launched its website, www.nstmis-dst.org on Internet. The site, designed and developed by Vigyan Prasar, was inaugurated by the Honorable Minister of State for Science & Technology, Shri Bachi Singh Rawat, on the occasion of National Science Day on February 28, 2002, at Technology Bhawan, New Delhi. Prof. V.S. Ramamurthy, Secretary DST, Dr. Y.S. Rajan, Dr. Laxman Prasad, Head, NSTMIS and Dr. V.B. Kamble, Director, Vigyan Prasar, were also present during the function.

The site aims at providing information on continuous basis on resources – manpower and financial – devoted to S&T activities in the country.



Honourable Minister of State for Science & Technology, Shri Bachi Singh Rawat, unveils the website of NSTMIS on February 28, 2002. He is flanked by Prof. V.S. Ramamurthy, Secretary, DST (Left) and Dr. Laxman Prasad

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

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Pascal and His Triangle



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Scientific Laws and Society

“Give him a push, otherwise he cannot overcome his inertia!” “Once he gains some momentum he will be on his own!” “Do not hit him, he will hit back!” “Today’s world has become so competitive that only the best can survive!” “Not all can do every kind of job, only certain type of people can do certain types of job!” “Unless one puts in a conscious effort, things can only deteriorate!” How often we hear such phrases! Indeed, these and many other phrases employed by us in everyday conversation originate from our experiences in different walks of life. What is more, we rarely come across any exception to these statements in the living world. We accept them as “laws” that govern human behaviour and hence society.

It is during our formal study of science that we become familiar with the laws that govern the natural phenomena. In due course, we realise that the laws of science do find parallels in fields other than science as well - be it in a social context or inter-personal behaviour. At a particular point of time, we feel convinced about the universal nature of the scientific laws and their applicability to almost any field of human activity. We are led to believe that our experiences in life - good or bad - were indeed manifestations of these laws.

As a result, we try to interpret almost every social phenomenon in terms of these “universal” laws. In due course, we tend to develop a faith that these are the laws that are fundamental to understand human nature. Surely, we marvel at the applicability of Newton’s laws of motion to human behaviour when we talk about a push to overcome mental inertia which refers to the Newton’s first law of motion. The tendency to react either physically or through angry words when hurt by someone is a manifestation of the Newton’s third law of motion. When we say that only the best can survive in today’s world, we are obviously talking of Darwin’s famous law of survival of the fittest. A certain job that requires only certain kind of people to accomplish obviously refers to the natural selection doctrine of Darwin again. Finally, the statement that one needs to put in conscious and continuous effort lest order and discipline might deteriorate is an expression of the second law of thermodynamics. Indeed, one can find many more examples of application of scientific laws in fields other than science.

It is, however, necessary to exercise sufficient caution while applying the laws of science in the social context. Occurrence of an event in society is a result of several complex phenomena taking place simultaneously, or in quick succession. A social event is thus a sum total effect of different scientific laws operating within their domains either at the same time, or in quick succession. To understand or explain a social phenomenon or an event, it would be naive to take recourse to a particular scientific law in isolation, and ignore the rest.

Let us be more specific. Group clashes are often attributed to the Newton’s third law of motion. However, if timely intervention is not made, there is every chance that the situation may deteriorate - the second law of thermodynamics making its ubiquitous presence felt.

Incidentally, there was a period in history spanning seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - the centuries in which Galileo and Newton lived - when the philosophers emphasized the use of reason as the best method of learning the truth, and relied heavily on the scientific method, with its emphasis on careful experimentation and observation. Indeed, this was called the Age of Reason. They attacked social injustice, superstition and ignorance. They blamed those who kept others in ignorance to maintain their vested interests and personal power. They believed that each person has a rational will which makes it possible to carry out plans, and has a capacity to reason. However, later on a great change occurred in people’s outlook and the value system. They came to value feeling rather than the reason and prefer passion, individuality, and spontaneity to discipline, order and control.

Surely, to understand the complex social phenomena and how the scientific laws operate in the societal framework, it is today that we need the Age of Reason the most. Scientific knowledge and the laws of science should help us transform the society where peace and order prevail, and the quality of life improves. Let us refrain from tossing the names of great scientists to justify our actions or inactions. Let us not blame it on scientific laws for our misgivings!

□ V.B. Kamble

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