

What Science Academies do for Indian Women in Mathematics

There is no authenticated explicit study made on this topic. However, it is implicit in some books or documents on the women scientists of India brought out by the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi in 2004 and the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore in 2008. I took upon the task of picking up the most striking pieces from them and a few other sources and rearranging them with a sprinkling of colour. The purpose is to bring home the point that regardless of whether it is less or more than expected, it should provoke us to assert ourselves and make all sincere efforts to increase our participation in study and practice of Mathematics meaningfully.

SCIENCE CAREER FOR INDIAN WOMEN

An examination of
Indian women's access to and
retention in scientific careers

A
Report – 2004

INDIAN NATIONAL SCIENCE
ACADEMY

LILAVATI'S DAUGHTERS

The Women Scientists of India

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RAMASWAMY

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This collection of biographical and autobiographical sketches is one of the initiatives of the Women in Science (WiS) panel of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore.

<http://www.ias.ac.in/womeninscience/>

One hundred Indian women scientists talk of
WHAT

- brought them to science
- kept their interest alive
- has helped them achieve distinction in their careers.

The main objective of various Science Academies is to promote science in India and harness scientific knowledge for humanity and for national welfare.

In any activity like electing Fellows, deciding on Medals, prizes, lecture awards, fellowships, grants, membership of committees etc., merit is the only consideration. In my long and rather close association with INSA, I have never seen any advantage or disadvantage given to any woman scientist on account of being a woman.

As in 2011, INSA has about 815 Fellows including 46 women. The number of Fellows in Mathematical Sciences is 70 and it includes 6 women. The highest ratio is in Medical Sciences - 15 amongst 69. The Council of 31 members has one woman scientist as a Vice-President and two more as members. Names in all the records give no indication of the scientist being a man or a woman.

Science Career for Indian Women is a study of

- the status with regard to study and practice of science by Indian women,
- factors influencing science career for them,

- recommendations for facilitating women's entry and continuation in science career.

It has relied on feedbacks from women scientists and post-graduate students, from all over India.

In fact, INSA President, Prof. M.V.S. Valiathan, a reputed Cardiac Surgeon, identified the topic as a thrust area and constituted a committee mainly of woman scientists including Prof. R. Parimala. It began its work on the Women's Day in 2003 and assigned a part to Research Centre for Women Studies and S.N.D.T. University in Mumbai.

If time permits:

For quick information on enrolment, reasons for joining present job, distribution of type of work handled by woman scientists etc. we can see

- Tables 6 and 7 on p. 16
- Table 9 on p. 37
- Table 18 on p. 44
- Table 22 on p. 46.

For specific recommendations, we can look at

- Table A. on p. 85
- Table B. on p. 86.

LILAVATI's DAUGHTERS

BUT who needs to know what the Academies do for Women. None of the ones whose views I am going to quote from their essays in Lilavati's daughters! One good thing the able editors, Rohini Godbole and Ram Ramaswamy, did is -to choose from all strata, the common thread being the level of joy authors felt in doing Science for the sake of it.

Radha Balakrishnan:- The joy that one derives out of original research, however small one's contribution maybe, cannot be explained in words. It has to be experienced.

Sudha Bhattacharya:- When it comes to Science, be demanding...because you are worth it!

Mangla Narlikar:- I enjoyed writing a book on how to make Mathematics interesting and accessible.

Raman Parimala:- Realize the immense beauty of Mathematics and enhance it!

The moment you find
answers more questions
arise!

