

Ahmedabad Mirror Bureau
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You know about Archimedes' Eureka moment, and you know about Newton's apple. But do you know how Aryabhata discovered the mathematical importance of zero? Neither do we. Concerned by this apparent lack of awareness, the Indian Institute of Technology-Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) is holding a workshop, to explore the scope to improve History of Science studies in India.

Showing how almost all of Europe's mathematical advancements were inspired by mathematical advancements taking place in India, aerospace scientist and Padma Vibhushan awardee Roddam Narasimha said the subject needed to be included in mainstream education.

CAN'T IGNORE ORIGIN OF SCIENCE

"We can not afford to ignore the origin of sciences in our country, as youngsters need to know the roots of important innovations, discoveries and inventions in the country," he said, on Day One of the two-day workshop that began on Saturday.

Youngsters seem to agree. Class 9 student Shivam Trivedi (14) called the workshop an eye-opener, and IIT-Gn BTech student Dhyey Shah (18) said, "The origins of science in India is intriguing. Including this subject in the mainstream would help us learn how our practices have evolved over time."

IIT-Gn already offers an elective in the subject, taught by Michel Danino. The Indology expert, who is originally from France, said that scholars differ in



Padma Vibhushan awardee Roddam Narasimha (right) addresses an audience at the workshop

Bridging gap between history and science

Indian Institute of Technology- Gandhinagar workshop sees experts looking to improve scope of History of Science studies in India

their perspectives on the history of science in India. "Some scholars find no science in ancient India. To them, her contributions are limited, at best, to the decimal place-value system of numeral

notation.... At the other end, over enthusiastic exponents have tried to portray early Indian scientists as creators of virtually all science, and inventors of wondrous machines such as *vimanas*

or nuclear weapons. Both stands are untenable," he said.

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MICHEL DANINA
Indology expert

where, a gradual process, rich in brilliant insights but also, at times, in errors or approximations," he added.

Educators say being familiar with the history of science would make science easier to teach. Science communicator Chitra Upadhyay said, "Knowing the history of science will enable me to use narratives to teach children since it will grab their attention."

COMPARTMENTALISATION BLAMED

Experts also blamed compartmentalisation for the subject's neglect. "Scientists expect historians to explore the history of science, while historians think of it as the job of scientists. As a result, the number of scholars working in the field has been shrinking, despite the rise in demand for information on India's past scientific and technological achievements," Narasimha said.

There were around 100 participants in the workshop including 13 speakers from various institutes in the country.