

easy to get things wrong!... Popularizers are not just taking something away, but adding a "story", and human context to the science.' Among popular books Kanigel suggested the reading of *A Mathematician's Apology* by G. H. Hardy. Ramachandran noted that *Journey Into Light* by G. Venkataraman, has hard science (physics) published in a different font size in the book, such that even if one skips these paragraphs, the flow of the biography is well-maintained, widening the readership to both technical and general.

An interaction between a few scientists of the Indian Institute of Science and journalists was arranged during the workshop. Experts from both the research and science journalism communities expressed grievances. Scientists condemned journalists of misreporting, and journalists about timely access to information from scientists. Both the groups mutually acknowledged the need for press releases to be furnished by science and technology institutes.

The science writing workshop was organized by the Indian Academy of Sciences, National Board for Higher Mathematics, Ramanujan Mathematical Society and Center for Advancement of Public Understanding of Science and Technology, as part of the commemoration of the 125th birth anniversary of Ramanujan. The workshop was held at the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore, during 29–30 December 2011, where Kanigel touched upon several aspects of writing long-form articles and book writing. The participants of the workshop were a mix of young and veteran science journalists working in newspapers, magazines, journals and television. The workshop provided the rare opportunity for young journalists to interact with the prolific (and a minuscule number of) science journalists of the country.

The science writing workshop was followed by a Public Lecture on 'Ramanujan as Everyman' by Kanigel at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. In

his talk, Kanigel recalled the experience of his visit to India for researching on *The Man Who Knew Infinity*. Just when Kanigel landed in Madras, India, in November 1988 and hired an autorickshaw, good luck had him sharing the autorickshaw with the grandson of R. Narayana Iyer, who worked with Ramanujan at the Madras Port Trust! Kanigel said that this incidence left him thinking if there is some other interpretation to this.

After tracing the life of Ramanujan, Kanigel said that Ramanujan cared about others taking him seriously and respecting him. 'In this sense Ramanujan is just like us...' This is also evident in the letter he sent to Hardy after his election to the Royal Society of London. Kanigel said that Ramanujan's is not a truly happy story, but it is mostly a happy story for he found what he sought – freedom to do mathematics.

Richa Malhotra

NIH Director, Francis S. Collins in India



Francis S. Collins is the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Maryland, USA. He was the leader of the Human Genome Project. Collins visited India regarding a collaborative project between India and USA on research in

diabetes. During his visit, Collins was invited to deliver the centenary lecture of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore on 3 December 2011. In his talk titled 'Human Genome and Beyond', Collins recalled that when the Human Genome Project was first proposed in the late 1980s, it was extremely controversial and was faced with opposition from a majority of the scientific community because it seemed totally out of reach; there were concerns that it would take the money away from other areas of research. Collins said that after a decade of the publication of the draft of the human genome, there is still a long way to turn the 3 billion letters of the genome into real knowledge.

The following is a glimpse of his interaction with the audience and the students of IISc after the talk:

Are any major projects on global health being planned by NIH?

We have just started the H3 project in Africa. We have lots of projects being

considered in Africa and other parts of the world; that is one of the reasons I am here in India.

What is your opinion of science becoming more corporate and commercial?

Well, we need the corporate sector. If you are going to develop products that the public is looking for, be they diagnostic tests or therapeutics, then that's not something academics or the universities and institutes are likely to do; carrying that all the way to the point of a product. So my sense is we have to make the most of the skills of both components of this public-private partnership; in particular, that means we need to understand each other, maybe better than has been the case. One of my goals was to try to focus on speeding up the translational process; how do we go from this deluge of basic discoveries about the molecular basis of disease to therapeutics. There are a series of steps involved. Companies look at it as too early to make invest-

ments in developing a therapeutic, particularly in uncommon diseases. It is going to be up to the academic community to carry it little further to say that not only this is the gene that is mutated in that condition, but how can I come up with a strategy to compensate for that, and you can see some successes that have started to happen in that regard. I think we need to recognize that for success we really need to figure out what can academia do, what private sector can do, and if there is a gap in between, how you can fill that.

Your experience as the leader of the Human Genome Project...

It was the first time that there was a big biology project. When the genome project was put together, we were doing enough to know how to deal with this. It was particularly challenging because there were several countries involved. My job was to lead the enterprise, but I didn't really control the funds. A lot of the leadership work was getting every-

body to see what the opportunity was and recognizing that it would be successful if we really did all that work together. After so much work, you couldn't say you have finished sequencing the genome if the cent per cent didn't get finished. It got all divided up; that worked pretty well and the fact that it worked gave a lot of momentum to other projects. Coming from different countries, everybody agreed to the same quality standards, trying to make sure they were not duplicating.

India is becoming a hub of clinical trials. Is this trend good for the country?

I think being involved in clinical trials is an opportunity. I would not agree that being invited to participate is a negative; it is a positive, but you have to be able to say 'no that trial does not suit what your own view is', but most people who once have it explained and understand the benefits and risks have a chance to participate in something that might or might

not help them, but help the people of their country. The idea that clinical trials are being conducted in India in a significant way is a positive. Obviously, you want to be sure that it is being done in a completely ethical way, and anybody who undergoes trials has to have a chance to have it explained what it has, what the risks are and have a chance to say no without any consequences which affect their basic medical care. I cannot comment if those rules are being violated or not, but it is unfortunate that people look at clinical trials and say that they are using India as a 'guinea pig' because they think nobody in other parts of the world agrees to participate in these. That's not true; certainly in the US there are thousands of clinical trials and most of the time when we invite people to be part of it, they say yes.

Richa Malhotra
e-mail: rchmalhotra@gmail.com

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