

forecasting the monsoon in recent years (Gowariker *et al.*, 1989; Thapliyal and Kulshrestha, 1992). The approach used in India relies heavily on teleconnections that have been established through the use of statistical analysis and that have a dynamical and thermodynamical basis. It is felt that a similar seasonal forecasting technique should be developed for the Canadian prairies and possibly the USA corn belt⁴.

All the successes notwithstanding, this year's aberration is thought provoking. Finally, there are three observations. Three years ago, IMD replaced 3 of the

original 16 parameters (having apparently turned insensitive as predictors) by 3 other parameters, and based on this gave the last 3 years' forecasts. Secondly, one hopes that IMD has now reached a level of professionalism by which any member of the forecast team, given the model, can give the same forecast. Finally, no model seems visible anywhere on the scientific horizon better than the IMD model.

1. Gowariker, V., Thapliyal, V., Sarkar, R. P., Mandal, G. S. and Sikka, D. R., *Mausam*, 1989, **40**, 115–122.

2. Gowariker, V., Thapliyal, V., Kulshrestha, S. M., Mandal, G. S., Sen Roy, N. and Sikka, D. R., *ibid*, 1991, **42**, 125–130.
3. Blanford, H. F., *Proc. R. Soc., London*, 1834, **37**, 3–22.
4. Ray Garnett, R., <http://www.esig.ucar.edu/elmino/garnett.html>.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES



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A great educational institution

During the first fortnight of this month the Madras Presidency College celebrated its Centenary with great social pomp and academic pageantry. The old students, who had assembled on this historic occasion to testify their affection and loyalty to their College, were legitimately in a holiday mood, and the present students, temporarily relieved of their anxious thoughts about books, studies and examinations, must have naturally made the most ardent contributions to the gaiety of the varied festivities, which, judged by the press reports, were ingeniously conceived and delightfully enjoyed.

This great Institution, during the long period of its existence, has been a fertile cradle in producing distinguished young men, who in later life have achieved remarkable success in the different spheres of public activities in which they were engaged. On this memorable occasion which, in certain respects, marks the turning-point in the career of the College, it

must have been a matter of pride and pleasure to the staff and students to recall to their memory the names of those eminent men who are no longer with us, and who have left indelible impressions of their genius on whatever work it was their lot to perform.

The Presidency College at one time enjoyed the reputation of being an aristocratic institution, receiving within its portals princes and patricians, which used to provoke the retort that it fell to the lot of other colleges to produce princes and patricians among their scholars. Whether it really possessed this dubious reputation or not, the staff relied, almost to the point of religious fervour, on the theory that impersonal teaching of prescribed text-books formed the backbone of sound Indianism, with the result that the students imbibed all their lessons and even the superiority complex of their professors. However, within the last three decades, a great change has overtaken the College which, having shed its aristocratic clothes, has assumed the humbler garments of democracy and even the graceful short-skirts of feminism. This alteration in the spirit and the complexion of the College has followed in the wake of the progressive Indianisation of its staff—a body of eminent scholars and scientists, who worthily uphold the high formal academic standards for which it was always distinguished. It seems to us that the traditions of any educational institution are built up by the co-operative effort of the members of the staff and the students, and this body of traditions is enriched by the achieve-

ments of the latter when they enter life. From the standpoint of output of scientific investigations, none of the South Indian Colleges were distinguished till 1900 except, perhaps, in one department of study in the Presidency college, where the researches of Sir Alfred Bourne led to his election into the Royal Society. It is a sad reflection on the scientific teaching of our colleges, that after decades of toil and travail, we could produce a single Sir Venkataraman. The most baneful influence that pervaded the academic atmosphere of the higher educational institutions of South India in the last century was the competitive spirit, which manifested in the form of a rivalry for annexing prizes at the public examinations. If the energy of students had not been expended in memorising text-books and in leaping over the murderously high hurdles academically named public examinations, but had been conserved and directed towards developing independent thinking, promoting the spirit of independent enquiry and fostering small pieces of independent work in the laboratories, the Madras colleges should have produced more scientists, more scholars, more statesmen and more jurists, whose collective accomplishments would be the true and lasting foundation of their traditions. The tradition of an institution as an asylum of higher teaching of text-books is one thing; the tradition of an institution as a dynamic centre for extending and conquering the untrodden fields of knowledge is a totally different thing.