
Why is Ramanujan still jobless?¹

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Abstract

In December 2011, 91 years after his death, in recognition of his contribution to mathematics, the Government of India declared that Ramanujan's birthday (22 December) should be celebrated every year as National Mathematics Day, and also declared 2012 the National Mathematical Year . Does all the noise and din on celebrating Srinivasan Ramanujan [1] make any sense ? Let us stop, and reflect how we would treat Srinivasan Ramanujan , today.

1 Why is Ramanujan still jobless?

Ever since his return to India in 1919, from Cambridge (UK), Srinivasa Ramanujan [2] is still jobless and miserable. His fate would have been much different, and happier, had he not carried all these disqualifying handicaps with him :

1. He was born in a so-called upper-caste, Brahmin, family.
2. He had no political support, nor boasted of any godfather.
3. He was a social misfit. He was a vegetarian, a teetotaller, and too religiously minded. He claims that his inspiration came in his dreams, from the Hindu goddess Namagiri.
4. His academic record, in school and college, was not very brilliant.

¹Srinivasa Ramanujan (22 December 1887 - 26 April 1920)

5. He was an introvert, and not too impressive in oral communications.
6. He wants to teach mathematics, the most despised and ignored subject in India. Many institutions, mostly in the engineering stream, have no stand-alone mathematics department. Mathematics is hidden under the umbrella term called “humanities”. [3]
7. He has worked mostly in isolation, As a result, he sometimes rediscovered known theorems [2].
8. His papers were “not clear” to many of the people who have to judge his worth
9. His colleagues and peers are of the opinion that his approach to mathematics is jerky and most unorthodox. He often works leaping from insight to insight without formally proving the logical steps in between.
10. His work was too abstract, and restricted in scope.
11. He has not been able to demonstrate any useful application of his work.
12. He does not possess a “PhD” degree. His FRS is not officially “recognised” by Indian rules.
13. His health was poor and fragile. He would not pass any of the mandatory medical examination, for a job in any Government-run institution.

1.1 If dreams were horses ...

If we really mean any respect to this genius, let us not see any more Srinivasa Ramanujan languish like the first Srinivasa Ramanujan. Let no more Srinivasa Ramanujan look for mentors in far-off shores. Let no more Srinivasa Ramanujan suffer and die uncared and unattended. Let there be no more hollow celebrations, when we don't mean it. May this dream come true.

2 Concluding remarks

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3 About the author



Figure 1: The pensive Professor

Parthasarathy is an aggressive supporter of FOSS. He teaches discrete mathematics, and preaches \LaTeX and Linux, to students of Computer Science, at Hyderabad, India, and at Kathmandu, Nepal. He would be happy to assist anyone, particularly students, teachers, and institutions, who are genuinely interested in these topics.

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